



Public Comment Appendix for

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

Case description

A user posted alleged historical photos showing churches in Baku, Azerbaijan, with accompanying text stating that Baku was built by Armenians and asking where the churches have gone. The user stated that Armenians are restoring mosques on their land because it is part of their history. The user said that the "т.а.з.и.к.и" are destroying churches and have no history. The user stated that they are against "Azerbaijani aggression" and "vandalism". The content was removed for violating Facebook's [hate speech](#) policy. The user indicated in their appeal to the Oversight Board that their intention was to demonstrate the destruction of cultural and religious monuments.



Public Comment Appendix for

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

The Oversight Board is committed to bringing diverse perspectives from third parties into the case review process. To that end, the Oversight Board has established a public comment process.

Public comments respond to case descriptions based on the information provided to the Board by users and Facebook as part of the appeals process. These case descriptions are posted before panels begin deliberation to provide time for public comment. As such, case descriptions reflect neither the Board's assessment of a case, nor the full array of policy issues that a panel might consider to be implicated by each case.

To protect the privacy and security of commenters, comments are only viewed by the Oversight Board and as detailed in the [Operational Privacy Notice](#). All commenters included in this appendix gave consent to the Oversight Board to publish their comments. For commenters who did not consent to attribute their comments publicly, names have been redacted. To withdraw your comment, please email contact@osbadmin.com.

To reflect the wide range of views on cases, the Oversight Board has included all comments received except those clearly irrelevant, abusive or disrespectful of the human and fundamental rights of any person or group of persons and therefore violating the [Terms for Public Comment](#). Inclusion of a comment in this appendix is not an endorsement by the Oversight Board of the views expressed in the comment. The Oversight Board is committed to transparency and this appendix is meant to accurately reflect the input we received.

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00033

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

John

Commenter's first name

Zakarian

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

None

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

Turkish backed Azeri aggression in Artsakh led to killing of innocents and destruction of churches and hospitals. Russia brokered a peace deal but the Azeris continue to violate the deal, and violate international law and norms of decency by destroying churches and desecrating graves and erasing the thousand year history of the original native population

Full Comment

Turkish backed Azeri aggression in Artsakh led to killing of innocents and destruction of churches and hospitals. Russia brokered a peace deal but the Azeris continue to violate the deal, and violate international law and norms of decency by destroying churches and desecrating graves and erasing the thousand year history of the original native population

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00037

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Withheld

Commenter's first name

Withheld

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Withheld

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

Use of derogatory term TAZIKI (means small handheld basins for laundry and other uses) to describe a whole nation insults the nation and violates civil decorum. User falsified history of Baku and restoration of a mosque, when 63 mosques were destroyed by Armenians and the remains were used as pig sties. Caucus Albanian churches were vandalised and turned into Armenian churches and Russian church was completed obliterated. Azerbaijani cemeteries were destroyed by Armenians in Karabakh and 7 regions of Azerbaijan around Karabakh Ambassadors of several western countries visited the vandalised sites in Karabakh and confirmed the facts stated above. Armenian church in capital of Azerbaijan stands tall after multimillion dollar restoration.

Full Comment

This post insulted the whole nation of Azerbaijan, called the whole nation TAZIKI (Russian word for handheld basin for chores). But in fact, the TAZIKI was used as an acronym for even worse derogatory words that lady never uses. If that wasn't enough, an ancient 2500 years old (3000 years ago first settlements established) city of Baku , the capital of Azerbaijan, where I was born and where half of my ancestors come from was falsely named as a city built by Armenians , that were not even present in Baku until Russian Tsar Peter the Great started moving Armenians in masses into Caucuses in 18-th century from Iran and Turkey after he conquered it. So, there could be no Armenian churches in Baku left from ancient times. There were churches and mosques that were repurposed by Soviet KGB after the invasion of Azerbaijan by Soviet Union, but Azerbaijanis were the victims of mass murders

during the invasion and clearly couldn't defend even their lives, much less mosques and churches. Another falsehood in the post is the restoration by Armenians of a mosque. During 32 years of Armenian occupation of Azerbaijan (1988-2020) 63 mosques were either destroyed or vandalised and used as pig sties in occupied Karabakh and 7 occupied regions surrounding Karabakh. Vandals did not spare Russian or Albanian churches either. Russian churches were completely demolished and stones used for various purposes. Albanian churches were renamed into Armenian churches and the ancient symbols were removed, scraped off, etched over, crosses and bells replaced. Ambassadors from several western states visited the vandalised sites recently after Azerbaijan liberated most of the occupied lands and were astonished by the level of disregard to human life, historical heritage and basic decency. Between 1988-1994 Armenians mass murdered ethnic Azerbaijanis in Karabakh and surrounding areas, 4 UN resolutions called on Armenia to end the occupation and withdraw the troops, but emboldened by Russia and Iran, Armenia ignored it all. 800,000 ethnic Azerbaijanis were chased at gun point from Karabakh and 7 regions. 30,000 Azerbaijanis died. President of Armenia proudly opened up to "genocide of Khojali", where every single civilian was brutally murdered, even infants. Similar mass murders occurred in Fuzuli, Agdam, Lachin. Those cities remained as ghost cities since then. Meanwhile, Armenian lobby in US were showing photos of murdered Azerbaijanis in Khojali and claiming that it was Azerbaijanis who were killing Armenians. After being caught red handed by Human Rights watch group and UNESCO representatives, they simply stopped showing those photos but the false narrative continued for 30 years. If that wasn't enough, during recent clashes between Armenia and Azerbaijan that flared up again, Armenia aimed to bomb the oil pipeline that was delivering oil to Europe and 40% of Israel's oil. Forbidden SCUD and SMERCH Russian missiles, delivered through Iran, were used by Armenia to destroy Azerbaijan's infrastructure, purposely aimed at pipeline, water reservoirs and dams, biggest and most populated civilian cities of Azerbaijan that are way outside of the occupied regions. And then Armenian lobby in US and Europe were using photos and videos of levelled to the ground city of Ganja in Azerbaijan to spin false propaganda of Azerbaijan attacking Armenia. For past 30 years of war not a single bullet was fired on the territory of Armenia, not a single civilian killed in Armenia, not a single house or hospital got bombed in Armenia. All of the killing and bombing was in Azerbaijan. 20% of Azerbaijan was occupied by Armenia. Karabakh and 7 regions around it were ethnically cleansed by Armenians. Historical heritage of Azerbaijan was wiped out by Armenians in occupied regions. 100 trillions of dollars is the lowest estimate of damage that Armenia inflicted on Azerbaijan. And then Armenians had a nerve to demand the separation of Karabakh from Azerbaijan, now that it is predominantly ethnically Armenian (after a good job of ethnic cleaning). After recent peace deal signed by Armenia and Azerbaijan, there is a chance that two neighbours can find a way to coexist and 800,000 ethnic

Azerbaijanis can return to their lands if not homes , because for past one month Armenians Are burning down all of the civilian structures in Karabakh and liberated from occupation 7 regions. All of the forests are chopped down or burned. All of the water pipes blown up. Cemeteries were dug up and then the entire regions was filled by mines. International authorities stated that it will take between 10-16 years to de-mine Azerbaijani lands. Water wells are being poisoned. Ecological disaster is unfolding in Azerbaijan, masterminded and supported by Armenian lobby across the world and Nobody is stopping this. Armenian lobby wants for fighting to resume. They were collecting millions “for Armenian fund”, when the war was ongoing. They need it. Now , you can see, that posts like the one in question will flare things up again. There is enough hatred that Armenian lobby is spreading as it is, holding webinars every week, spreading their falsehoods. Facebook can not become their tool.

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00039

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Ilaha

Commenter's first name

Mammadzada

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

None

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

This post shows how some armenians dislike Azerbaijan. Also, Azerbaijan preserves not only tens of Catholic, Provoslav churches, Jewish synagogues, but also armenian church is in perfect condition right in the heart of Baku. Azerbaijan is a multicultural country where heritage of all nations and religions is preserved and protected.

Full Comment

armenian side is using facebook to spread false news and hate speech towards Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan exists for many centuries and has a lot of different nations living peacefully side by side. This post is not more than about false and hate.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00041

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Kazim

Commenter's first name

Tosayev

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

University of Michigan

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

The post is filled with false statements intended to spread hate and wrongly imply the inferiority of Azerbaijani people & superiority of Armenian people. The post also makes use of a common Russian slur used against the Azerbaijani people. Suggesting inferiority & use of slurs against Azerbaijanis is against Facebook Community Standards as Tier 2 and Tier 3 Hate Speech.

Full Comment

The first claim falsely states that "Baku was built by Armenians". A very basic search shows that this is false. Baku is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic ancient city with a rich history. Starting from early Roman expeditions, to Shirvanshah rule followed by Safavid invasion, Russian rule and eventually short-lived independence, Soviet rule, and then final independence in 1991, in no part of its history was there a period that could support the suggestion that "Baku was built by Armenians". Therefore, it can only be assumed that making this false statement was intended to dismiss Azerbaijani heritage as a "fabrication" & imply the common anti-Azerbaijani hate-speech that implies that "Azerbaijani peoples/culture never existed" which can be considered Tier 2 or Tier 3 Hate Speech according to Facebook Community Standards. The second claim that "Armenians are restoring mosques on their land because it is part of their history" is a false statement. According to the Caucasus Calendar of 1870, a statistical report published by the Russian Viceroyalty of the Caucasus, there were 269 Shia mosques in the Irevan (now Yerevan) Governorate's territories due to the heavy presence of Azerbaijanis in the territories (who have all been ethnically cleansed since then). Today, there is only 1 mosque in all of Armenia. The remaining 268 have been destroyed. Also, as has been documented by

worldwide media, the mosques in territories of Azerbaijan that have been illegally occupied by Armenian forces for more than 26 years have been totally destroyed or turned into barns. Therefore, the purpose of this false statement might be to imply the false superiority of Armenians over Azerbaijanis and to wrongly appropriate Muslim culture as their own, which can be considered Tier 2 or Tier 3 Hate Speech according to Facebook Community Standards. "т.а.з.и.к.и" is an insult based on the slur "Azeri" which is sometimes modified to the slur "Azik" which obviously rhymes with "tazik". "Tazik" is a bowl but in this specific case it refers to a toilet bowl. This is a common slur used against Azerbaijanis. This can be considered Tier 2 Hate Speech according to Facebook Community Standards.

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00042

Public comment number

Europe

Region

Ramiz

Commenter's first name

Behbudov

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

N/A

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

This is hate speech and fake news. The person categorized an entire nation with a derogatory word which attacks the dignity of Azerbaijanis as a people and Nation. Moreover, it is completely wrong to claim that Baku was built by Armenians. These types of misleading claims distort truth and stokes violence in a sensitive conflict.

Full Comment

In fact there are a few churches in Baku, including an Armenian church that stands intact as a protected site. One can google Armenian Church in Baku and see the condition of this church in real time. It is critically important that Baku was under Soviet rule between 1920-1991 and as an atheist system the Soviets destroyed many religious buildings across the Soviet Union including in Baku. Many Muslim mosques, Russian and Armenian churches were destroyed during the Soviet time due this policy. Blaming Azerbaijani people for these is wrong fundamentally. The word 'tazik' in Russian is an item to clean floor and is used as a slang among Russian speaking people as a derogatory word. This Armenian user has used this word as a hate speech against an entire nation. Therefore Facebook made a right decision and removed the post.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00051

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Heather

Commenter's first name

Miller

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Private

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

The Oversight Board should UPHOLD the decision to remove content. "Т.а.з.и.к.и" is a derogatory racial slur that Armenians use for Azerbaijanis. The user is calling all Azerbaijani people as dumb as a wash pot. This is hate speech based on race and ethnicity, and is incredibly offensive to 40 million Azerbaijanis around the world and ~ 1 million in the US. Given the amount of hate the user has towards Azerbaijanis, the user lost all credibility to discuss the cultural and religious monuments, because the user will absolutely work to undermine the Azerbaijani contributions to culture and religion of the region, given the user's prejudiced point of view. Facebook was correct in removing the content for violating Facebook's Hate Speech policy.

Full Comment

The Oversight Board should UPHOLD the decision to remove content. "Т.а.з.и.к.и" is a derogatory racial & ethnic slur that Armenians use for Azerbaijanis. 'Taz' in Russian means a pot, in which people wash clothes. A similar derogatory racial slur that Armenians use for Azerbaijanis is 'Aziki,' derogatory for Azerbaijani and by adding a 't' in the front of it to say "Т.а.з.и.к.и", this user made it even more offensive and derogatory. The user is calling all Azerbaijani people as dumb as a wash pot. This is hate speech based on race and ethnicity, and is incredibly offensive to 40 million Azerbaijanis around the world and ~ 1 million Azerbaijanis in the US. Given the amount of hate the user harbors towards Azerbaijanis, the user lost all credibility to discuss the cultural and religious monuments, because the user will absolutely work to undermine the Azerbaijani contributions to culture and

religion of the region, given the user's racially prejudiced point of view. Facebook was correct in removing the content for violating Facebook's Hate Speech policy. The Oversight Board should UPHOLD the decision to remove this content.

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00053

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Withheld

Commenter's first name

Withheld

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Withheld

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

Azerbaijan is trying to erase the Armenian history and culture.

Full Comment

Armenia is one of the oldest nations in the world. Armenia is the first country to adapt Christianity as a religion. It may have a small terirory but has a large and rich history. Armenia is unfortunate to be surrounded by muslim countries who have constantly attacked Armenia throuout the centuries destroying anything on their path. In 1915 Turkey commited genocide of Armenians killing 1.5 million Armenians and occupying their lands. In 2020 Azerbaijan with the help of Turkey tried to realize genocide against Armenians living in Artsakh killing more than 4000 soldiers and civilians. A piece treaty was signed on Nov 9th 2020, it is Dec 4th today and we are still waiting for Azerbaijan to trade hundreds of Amenian war prizoners whom they are torturing, killing and showcasing it all on Facebook and Instagram. Azeris have also been destroying Armenian churches and Khachqars on the teritorries that are under their rule. Somehow, this is okay for the biggest social media management and they continue letting the circulations of these videos. It is a shame 🇷🇺🇷🇺🇷🇺

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00054

Public comment number

Central and South Asia

Region

Pascale

Commenter's first name

Baghdisar

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

None

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

Armenian cultural heritage is being destroyed and erased from the South Caucasus by colonial settlers like Azerbaijan and Turkey. This is not the first time something like this happens. Armenians have been living there for millennia. Nakhichevan, an Azerbaijan enclave used to be home to Armenians but after losing this territory, Azerbaijan has destroyed over 10 000 cross stones (Armenian cultural heritage).

Please read this article for more details :

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/mar/01/monumental-loss-azerbaijan-cultural-genocide-khachkars>

Full Comment

Please read this article for more details :

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/mar/01/monumental-loss-azerbaijan-cultural-genocide-khachkars>

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00055

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Withheld

Commenter's first name

Withheld

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Withheld

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

Churches build by Armenians in Baku and destroyed by Azerbaijan. They are doing as we speak AGAIN in Artsakh. Destroying historical sights bombing churches and committing historical genocide. All we want to do is bring worlds attention to it.

Full Comment

As we speak , Azerbaijan is destroying cemeteries that are the IULs ads of years old. Churches built by Armenians in 300 BC, 6th Century, 8th Century. Armenians had a kingdom in the region where current Baku is and had thousands of churches. They have attained them from our history.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00056

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Stephen

Commenter's first name

Oz

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Humanity

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

Stating facts about war crimes cannot be censored and silenced.

Full Comment

Stating facts about war crimes cannot be censored and silenced.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00057

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Withheld

Commenter's first name

Withheld

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Withheld

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

I would like to provide my support to the commentator, since a thorough research will sufficiently support their claims.

Full Comment

A thorough, non-biased research is necessary and will prove the accuracy of comments. Azerbaijan is a dictatorial country with extreme hate toward Armenian people and they will do anything to erase Armenian heritage from Nagorno Karabagh.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00062

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Withheld

Commenter's first name

Withheld

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Withheld

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

Azerbaijan has committed violent attack and attempted genocide on Armenians. They were backed by turkey in this recent attack on Armenia. Historically known, turkey committed the 1915 genocide against Armenians. In the 2000s official Azeri political figures have made many public comments about wanting to exterminate, kill, eradicate or remove Armenians from their historic land. This is genocide. One profile of genocide is cultural erasure. The post is showing exactly this.

Full Comment

Azerbaijan has committed violent attack and attempted genocide on Armenians. They were backed by turkey in this recent attack on Armenia. Historically known, turkey committed the 1915 genocide against Armenians. In the 2000s official Azeri political figures have made many public comments about wanting to exterminate, kill, eradicate or remove Armenians from their historic land. This is genocide. One profile of genocide is cultural erasure. The post is showing exactly this. Because of the work of a whistle blower, Facebook famously shut down An Azeri troll farm, thousands of Fame users and pages. This is just one facet of the full scale Psychological social media WAR Azeris have launched against the world to influence the global narrative in their favor. They have an army of people in their country commenting, bullying through DMs and in this case reporting. The DMs I've received on social media platforms you run include rape threats and gory videos of beheadings of "Azeri enemy Armenian dogs" while they send laughing face emojis. They gaslight the world based on the protocol they receive from their digital social media leaders— of which many videos have been translated and shown tipping off the vulnerable people and victims of their online activity as to just what

exactly the heck had been going on with the sheer terror we had been feeling!!! Other online activity that focuses on erasure of Armenians culture includes changing anything possible on the internet from “Armenian” to “Caucasian Albanian” so as to erase us from the internet. That church we built in the 5th century? Changed it to “Caucasian Albanian built” in Wikipedia. That song written in 1940 by famous Armenian composer? Stolen and pirated, claiming to be written by an Azeri composer and used for their olympics opening ceremony! They’ve said it (mayor of Baku said it) “the goal is for there to not be Armenians (in the region) by 2030”. They are erasing us, violently, physically with attacks they then get the media to call a war!!! And now on the Internet. They silence us hacking your safety and community guidelines measures. It’s difficult, I know personally, to keep up with this when it is the goal of a country with 8 million people! Armenians don’t have the time or need to specialize in online terror. We have lives to lead, fruit to grow and family’s to hold. Please help. I’m a 38 year old diasporan Armenian and I am emotionally drained of the terror these opportunistic groups are waging on our Armenian community’s psyche. Please don’t let them use your well intentioned community guidelines to silence our plight. The world needs to hear us too.

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00063

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Withheld

Commenter's first name

Withheld

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Withheld

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

This is posted to send a message to Facebook and to put a stop to the bias and propaganda

Full Comment

Armenians have lived in the land of modern day Armenia and Azerbaijan for over 7,000 years. Azerbaijan did not exist as a country until 1918 under Soviet leader Joseph Stalin as part of a deal made with Kemal Ataturk and to divide and conquer. There were Armenian churches in Sumgait, in Baku, in Nakhchivan and other places across Azerbaijan for centuries, before any Azerbaijani ever lived in the region. In 1920, Azerbaijanis massacre tens of thousands of Armenians and destroyed artifacts and thousands of years worth of history and religious monuments. In the pogroms against the Armenians in Sumgait, Baku, and Nakhchivan in the 1990s, churches and religious monuments were targeted by Azerbaijani soldiers and rioting Azerbaijani citizens again, with many of them being destroyed, desecrated, and set on fire in what acts of deliberate genocide and cultural/historical cleansing. Historical archived photographs do in fact reveal these Armenian religious monuments existed prior to the Soviet Union and formation of Azerbaijan. When Facebook ruled that comment as "hate speech", that was censorship of historically proven and documented truth. I demand that the comment be reinstated and that Facebook remove all internal company bias against Armenians, as this bias is strengthening the brutality of the Islamist Turkish and Azeri governments.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00065

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Rosemary N.

Commenter's first name

Palmer

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

None

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

How is this hate speech?

Full Comment

How is it hate speech? The user is talking about real actions that eliminated something they think important to preserve. Hate speech can't be the appropriate label to such things because if it is suppressed, any discussion of the appropriateness of tearing down buildings to be replaced with something else could also be justified. While hearing dispute may be tough, listening particularly things we feel strongly should not ever be said is how we check our own information and our own bias.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00070

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Hannah

Commenter's first name

Hoffman

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Personal

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

By deleting this post- who was it protecting? You can't have an opinion about violence and factual events? It wasn't calling for hate or retaliation or to hurt anyone in any manner. So explain to me what the intent in censoring it was?

Full Comment

No summary needed- see previous comments. It didn't seem to me that the above post was calling for violence or harmful actions. I'm really confused at why it was censored and who was the censorship supposedly protecting?

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00073

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Hokuma

Commenter's first name

Karimova

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

N/A

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

The Armenian Diaspora is using derogatory and offensive language when referring to Azerbaijani history and culture. Such statements create and promote hate, which perpetuates discrimination and violence against the people of Azerbaijan. This type of content should not be given space on social platform such as Facebook that aims to connect people and strengthen relationships.

Full Comment

Dear Members of the Oversight Board, please UPHOLD Facebook's decision and keep this content removed, because it VIOLATES Facebook's Hate Speech policy. The user describes the people of Azerbaijan as "т.а.з.и.к.и" which in Russian means a toilet bowl. This is done as a play on the Russian slang word used to label Azerbaijanis (Azeris) as "Aziki". This racial slur meets Facebook's Tier 1 definition of hate speech and is highly offensive to the 40 million global Azerbaijani community. With use of such demeaning language, it is obvious that this user has no intention of sharing factual and accurate information. No wonder the post was falsely proclaiming that a mono-national culture of Armenia, "built" the multi-national and diverse culture of Azerbaijan. If anything, history paints that the opposite is true. This individual mentioned that "Armenias are restoring mosques on their land because it is part of their history", which is completely false! According to the Caucasus Calendar of 1870, a statistical report published by the Russian Viceroyalty of the Caucasus, there were 269 Shia mosques in the Irevan (now Yerevan) territory, highlighting the heavy presence of Azerbaijanis on the land. However, once Azerbaijanis living there were ethnically cleansed from their homes, all but 1 mosque remains standing in present day Armenia. The remaining 268 mosques

were destroyed. Recent footage from the newly liberated lands of Nagorno Karabakh and the seven surrounding ethnic Azerbaijani villages from the Armenian occupation shows how little respect Armenians have towards their neighbor. Mosques on these ethnically cleansed territories were destroyed and turned into barns. The falsehood, hatred and misinformation in this post go against Facebook Community Standards, and can be considered as Tier 2 or Tier 3 Hate Speech. Given the depth of hate, contempt, and disdain the user expresses towards Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis, the user does not have any credibility to discuss cultural and religious monuments. The user will work to diminish and undermine the Azerbaijani contributions to culture and religion of the region, given the user's racially prejudiced and hateful point of view. Facebook was correct in removing this content for violating Facebook's Hate Speech policy. I am asking the Oversight Board to please UPHOLD Facebook's decision and keep this content removed. Thank you very much!

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00074

Public comment number

Central and South Asia

Region

Withheld

Commenter's first name

Withheld

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

NA

Organization

Yes

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

The Armenian Diaspora is using derogatory and offensive language when referring to Azerbaijani history and culture. Such statements create and promote hate, which perpetuates discrimination and violence against the people of Azerbaijan. This type of content should not be given space on a social platform such as Facebook that aims to connect people and strengthen relationships.

Full Comment

Dear Members of the Oversight Board, please UPHOLD Facebook's decision and keep this content removed, because it VIOLATES Facebook's Hate Speech policy. The user describes the people of Azerbaijan as "т.а.з.и.к.и" which in Russian means a toilet bowl. This is done as a play on the Russian slang word used to label Azerbaijanis (Azeris) as "Aziki". This racial slur meets Facebook's Tier 1 definition of hate speech and is highly offensive to the 40 million global Azerbaijani community. With the use of this demeaning language, it is obvious that this user has no intention of sharing factual and accurate information. No wonder their post falsely proclaims that a monoculture society of Armenia, "built" the multi-cultural and diverse capital of Azerbaijan, Baku. If anything, history paints a different picture. This individual mentions that "Armenians are restoring mosques on their land because it is part of their history", which is fake news. According to the Caucasus Calendar of 1870, a statistical report published by the Russian Viceroyalty of the Caucasus, there were 269 Shia mosques in the Irevan (now Yerevan) territory. This highlights the heavy presence of Azerbaijanis who once lived there, but were ethnically cleansed from their homes. Of these many mosques, only 1 remains standing today, the other 268 were destroyed. Recent footage from the newly

liberated lands of Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven surrounding villages from the Armenian occupation shows how little respect Armenians have towards the Azerbaijani culture. Mosques on these lands were also destroyed and turned into barns. Such a heinous, fictitious and uninformed post goes against the Facebook Community Standards, and can be considered as Tier 2 or Tier 3 Hate Speech. Given the depth of the contempt and disdain the user expresses towards Azerbaijan and Azerbaijanis, the user does not have any credibility to discuss cultural and religious monuments. The user will work to diminish and undermine the Azerbaijani contributions to culture and religion of the region. Given the user's racially prejudiced and hateful view point, Facebook was correct in removing this content. I am asking the Oversight Board to please UPHOLD its policy, and keep this content removed for violating Facebook's values. Thank you very much!

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00076

Public comment number

Europe

Region

Jacob

Commenter's first name

Mchangama

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Justitia

Organization

Yes

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

The user, using (alleged) historical photos of churches in Baku, stated that the destruction of the churches was going on. There are a plethora of images circulating social media which allegedly show the vandalization or destruction of Armenian churches (and monuments). The fact that such expression may come with a polemical or hyperbolic tone, referring to Azerbaijani ‘aggression’ and ‘vandalism’ could be reasonably expected in political speech, particularly in the current climate between the two countries. We do not consider this to constitute hate speech even within the broad conceptualisation that Facebook has granted this term. Silencing such speech has a chilling effect on the advancement of political debate.

Full Comment

Case 2020-003-FB-UA Case referred by user Facts A user posted alleged historical photos showing churches in Baku, Azerbaijan, with accompanying text stating that Baku was built by Armenians and asking where the churches have gone. The user stated that Armenians are restoring mosques on their land because it is part of their history. The user said that the "т.а.з.и.к.и" are destroying churches and have no history. The user stated they are against “Azerbaijani aggression” and “vandalism”. The content was removed for violating Facebook’s Hate Speech Policy. The user indicated in their appeal to the Oversight Board that their intention was to demonstrate the destruction of cultural and religious monuments. Contextual Issues The first point to note is that the user, using (alleged) historical photos of churches in Baku, stated that the destruction of the churches was going on. In terms of this point, it must be noted that between 1997 and 2006 nearly 90 churches were

destroyed by the Azerbaijan government whilst in the current conflict, there are a plethora of images circulating social media which allegedly show the vandalization or destruction of Armenian churches (and monuments). As such, the user is evidently seeking to discuss an issue of politics as well as religious heritage. The fact that such expression may come with a polemical or hyperbolic tone, referring to Azerbaijani ‘aggression’ and ‘vandalism’ could be reasonably expected in political speech, particularly in the current climate marking the relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Relevant Rules Facebook defines hate speech as a ‘direct attack on people based on what we call protected characteristics – race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, caste, sex, gender, gender identity, and serious disease or disability. We protect against attacks on the basis of age when age is paired with another protected characteristic, and also provide certain protections for immigration status. We define attack as violent or dehumanizing speech, harmful stereotypes, statements of inferiority, or calls for exclusion or segregation.’ Nowhere in the user’s post is there an attack against a protected group as defined above. Instead, the user is seeking to shed light on alleged occurrence from his/her own political perspective. As such, the user may be demonstrating a polemical tone against the Azerbaijan practices but is not targeting or attacking a protected characteristic but rather is critical of the Azerbaijan government. Facebook, however, did not contextualise the post. Had it done so it would be clear that this post was not an attack against a protected characteristic. Moreover, given the current conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia it is expected that political speech is to be found on social media platforms. Silencing or censorship such speech has a chilling effect on the public debate. Beyond the internal rules of Facebook, the Oversight Board must take into account the present post in light of Article 19 and Article 20(2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the threshold test set out by the Rabat Plan of Action. In fact, this case does not seem to meet even one of the six requirements to the threshold test set out by the Rabat Plan of Action. As noted by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression in 2019, hate speech must be narrowly defined in order to ensure the protection of freedom of expression. The Board must also consider the significance of political speech and the danger of hate speech laws infringing on political dissent was underlined in the Special Rapporteur’s 2019 report on Online Hate Speech. A broad interpretation of hate speech and a removal of posts such as the one in this case essentially serves to mute criticism of State practices and does little to promote a marketplace of ideas and public debate. Also, we would recommend the Board to consider a Norwegian Supreme Court judgement in which it noted that one cannot assume that what is said is, in fact, hateful. As underlined by the majority: ‘...The rule of law, and especially the consideration of foreseeability, dictates restraint when it comes to an expansive interpretation based on context. When it comes to punishable expressions the point must be that you can only be punished for what you have said, not what could

possibly have said.’ Conclusion As such, we do not consider this to constitute hate speech even within the broad conceptualisation that Facebook has granted this term under its Community Standards. Moreover, we consider that Facebook should have taken into account the current conflict in the region and expected speech that relate to this conflict. There is no advocacy or incitement to violence or hatred nor is there the slightest attainment of any of the elements within the Rabat Plan of Action. Instead, this case is a silencing/censoring activity of a matter of public issue/debate.

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00081

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Lucy

Commenter's first name

Varpetian

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Armenian Bar Association

Organization

Yes

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

- Referring to Azerbaijanis with the Russian word “тазики” does not meet the bar of hate speech. This colloquial term is not on par with egregious, illicit and overt slurs. The term simply does not infer or insinuate hate;
- The remaining parts of the post fall squarely within the realm of politically motivated speech. For example, “Azerbaijani aggression” refers to numerous documented cases of government-sponsored cultural erasure and ethnic cleansing throughout history. This is not hate speech just as a composed response to Jewish Holocaust or Armenian Genocide denial is not hate speech; and
- Abridging free speech sets a dangerous precedent of stifling an open exchange of ideas, including those that draw attention to acts of aggression.

Full Comment

On behalf of the Armenian Bar Association, a nonprofit and nonpartisan U.S. entity,[1] I submit this comment in support of the appeal in Case: 2020-003-FB-UA. Based on publicly available information, the post in question does not violate Facebook’s Community Standards on Hate Speech and the removal decision should be reversed. A summary of our main arguments precedes the detailed discussion:

- Referring to those who had a hand in destroying Christian Armenian churches and cultural monuments with the Russian word “тазики” does not cross the red line of hate speech. This colloquial term is not on par with egregious, illicit and overt slurs. The term simply does not infer or insinuate hate;
- The remaining parts of the post fall squarely within the realm of civil discourse and dialectical expressions of current affairs. “Azerbaijani aggression” refers to numerous documented cases of

government-sponsored cultural erasure and ethnic cleansing throughout history. This is not hate speech just as a composed response to Jewish Holocaust or Armenian Genocide denial is not hate speech; and •Abridging free speech sets a dangerous precedent of stifling an open exchange of ideas, including those that draw attention to acts of aggression. The use of the word “Тазики/Taziki” falls woefully short of qualifying as a slur egregious enough to warrant the removal of content for which the primary purpose, based on the description provided, is raising awareness of cultural erasure and historical revisionism. The etymology of the word “Taziki” comes from the Turkish word “Taz” which means a bowl – wide and shallow, round or oval container.[2] “Taziki” is a diminutive plural noun of “Taz” that means bowls. The Facebook user likely used this word in a casual way as it is a mere rhyme of “Aziki,” a diminutive term for Azerbaijanis. The term is barren of hostile, abusive or demeaning character and does not qualify as hate speech. The balance of the statements in the post falls squarely within political speech and does not constitute hate speech. Removing such a post threatens to censor politically-motivated speech. The user wrote that (s)he is against “Azerbaijani aggression” which cannot, and must not, be equated with dismissing a people as a whole or anything hate speech-related. If we cannot opine about the actions - aggressive or otherwise - of a country, how are the plights of an oppressed population to be shared with and documented for the international community? It is likely that this post was flagged by Azerbaijan’s troll farms, which, among other things, propagate pernicious propaganda for the end of Armenian culture and the manipulation of Armenian history.[3] The summary of the post said that the user posted “alleged” pictures of churches in Baku. Although the photos were not included, it is beyond cavil that multiple Armenian churches in Baku were previously destroyed.[4] At least one Armenian church is currently being used for non-Armenian and non-religious purposes. The reference to “Azerbaijani aggression” against Armenians in the context of Armenophobic propaganda, ethnicity-based pogroms, cultural genocide, historical revisionism, and desecration of holy sites is well-documented in numerous cases: 1. Destruction of Armenian churches in Nakhichevan, a native-Armenian region ethnically cleansed of Armenians during the 20th century;[5] 2. Deliberate bombing of the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral in Shushi, twice during the most recent Artsakh/Nagorno-Karabakh hostilities, in violation of the Geneva Conventions;[6] 3. Historical revisionism claiming that churches in parts of Artsakh being handed to Azerbaijan are “Christian Albanian,” despite well-documented archeological evidence that they are in fact Armenian.[7] 4. Prior to the Baku and Sumgait pogroms carrying out ethnic cleansing of Armenians, there were over 200,000 Armenians living in Baku.[8] Since Baku’s inception, Armenians contributed to the city in important ways, from playing a key role in developing Baku’s prosperous oil industry to their many architectural contributions.[9] The user’s primary purpose was to draw attention to the war crimes and cultural calamity directed towards Armenians. Such content should not be censored, as it draws

attention to crimes in the far reaches of the world that are otherwise not covered, or insufficiently covered in mainstream media. Removing such posts only serves to embolden those who would commit such crimes at the expense of oppressed people and would be consistent with the denial of the Jewish Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide. That is a consistency which Facebook would do well to avoid.

[1]www.armenianbar.org [2][https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Таз_\(посуда\)](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Таз_(посуда))
[3]<https://nymag.com/developing/2018/10/azerbaijan-trolls-q-a-katy-pearce.html><https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/craigsilverman/facebook-azerbaijan-troll-farm><https://www.ombuds.am/images/files/2032f021fe81176414a649d588ad0e86.pdf>
<https://flnka.ru/digest/6434-rouben-galichian-on-how-azerbaijan-falsifies-history.html> <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/10/08/eliminating-armenians-from-artsakh> [4]https://ru.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Список_армянских_храмов_на_территории_современного_Азербайджана [5]<https://hyperallergic.com/482353/a-regime-conceals-its-erasure-of-indigenous-armenian-culture> [6]<https://www.france24.com/en/20201008-devastation-inside-karabakh-church-hit-by-rocket><http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/armed-conflict-and-heritage/r-nav/frequently-asked-questions>[7]<https://twitter.com/presidentaz/status/1331624720597458944><https://www.wsj.com/articles/cultural-heritage-in-the-crosshairs-once-more-11605731198> [8]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Anti-Armenian_pogromshttps://ru.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Армяне_в_Азербайджанеhttp://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenians_in_Baku <https://youtu.be/y5ZwGKrER6A><https://youtu.be/KbpdHnBmDz0>[9]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Baku[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenians_in_Baku#Economic life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenians_in_Baku#Economic_life)

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00082

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Anna

Commenter's first name

Nubaryan

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

NA

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

This comment cannot be construed as a hate speech per Facebook's Community Guidelines. It is merely a political statement, a criticism of the Azerbaijani government over well documented destruction and desecration of Armenian cultural, historical and religious monuments.

Full Comment

Please accept this Comment as support of the appeal in Case: 2020-003-FB-UA. Based on the publicly available information the post in question does not violate Facebook's Community Guidelines on Hate Speech and the decision should be reversed. The Facebook user posted historical photos showing Armenian churches in Baku, Azerbaijan, with accompanying text stating that Baku was built by Armenians and asking where the churches have gone. The user said that the "т.а.з.и.к.и" are destroying churches and have no history, that he is against "Azerbaijani aggression" and "vandalism". The content was removed for violating Facebook's Hate Speech policy. The user appealed the removal of the comment as a hate speech by bringing the Oversight Board attention to his intention "to demonstrate the destruction of cultural and religious monuments." The Russian word "Тазики" does not constitute a hate speech. The etymology of the word "Тазики/Тазики" comes from the Turkish word "Тас" which means a bowl – wide and shallow, round or oval container Таз (посуда). "Тазики" is a diminutive plural noun that simply means bowls. The Facebook user likely used this word in a "playful" way as it is a mere rhyme of "Азики/ Aziki", a colloquial abbreviation for Azerbaijani people. The term lacks explicitly hostile, abusive or demeaning character in order to qualify as a hate speech. "Тазики" cannot be considered a

dangerous speech either. A dangerous speech is any form of expression (e.g. speech, text, or images) that can increase the risk that its audience will condone or commit violence against members of another group. The use of the word “Тазикки” does not encourage violence or increase the risk of committing violence. To determine if a certain word can be considered dangerous speech one must examine both the content of the word and the social, cultural and historical context it was used in. When analyzing Facebook user’s comment above, one should first ask if this message would incite a person ready to commit or condone violence. This comment can hardly be considered inflammatory, provocative and was not directed to a susceptible audience, therefore it does not meet a dangerous speech criteria. The comment was rather a political statement, a criticism of Azerbaijani government for not preserving Armenian churches, culture and history in the territories that are under Azerbaijan’s supervision. The comment also addresses the Azerbaijani government’s aggression and vandalism against Armenians as an ethnic group, against Armenian heritage, culture and religion. “Armenia as a country is of no value. It is actually a colony, an outpost run from abroad, a territory artificially created on ancient Azerbaijani lands” is just one of the similar remarks made by the Azerbaijani president Ilham Aliyev. Extreme Armenophobia has become normalized in an increasingly authoritarian Azerbaijan. From their very childhood Azerbaijanis are taught to treat Armenians as their worst enemies and a despicable nation. The anti-Armenian policies that Azerbaijan nurtures in its society aim to eliminate the Armenian nation from this world. Azerbaijani state officials at the highest level have frequently been involved in fueling anti-Armenian xenophobia and hatred, glorifying murderers of Armenians. On September 27, 2020 Azerbaijan started an unprovoked attack against the Republic of Artsakh (F/K/A Nagorno-Karabakh) that shortly escalated into a large-scale war. During the 44-day war, Azerbaijan committed multiple war crimes that are well documented by several democratic countries and their intelligence agencies and multiple international organizations, including the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Azerbaijan also intentionally targeted the cultural and religious heritage of Armenians in Artsakh. On October 8th, 2020, Azerbaijani armed forces launched two intentional assaults on St. Holy Savior Ghazanchetsots Cathedral of Artsakh in the town of Shushi, which is the recognizable cultural and religious symbol of Artsakh. The Azerbaijani forces struck the Cathedral two times within a few hours with the use of striking and manageable drones. This act of Azerbaijan is in line with its continuous practice of destroying the Armenian cultural heritage of Artsakh. It also demonstrates radical disrespect towards Christian elements of Armenian identity. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a decades long conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the land that has belonged to ethnic Armenians for centuries. During the conflict and well before that Azerbaijan continuously destroyed numerous Armenian churches, Armenian cross stones known as Khachkars (specifically, destruction of Armenian khachkars in

Nakhijevan is well documented) and other evidence of Armenian heritage, culture and presence on territories that once belonged and/or were widely populated by Armenians. Facing an existential threat, on November 9th, 2020 a ceasefire statement was signed as a result of the 44-day war per which Azerbaijan was allowed to hold on to the territories of Artsakh it took during the aggression and was to receive additional areas of Artsakh that were under Armenian supervision. One of those territories is Mataghis where Azeri soldiers have already desecrated several Armenian cemeteries and destroyed multiple Armenian khachkars. Similar atrocities took place in other areas that were transferred to Azerbaijan as well. When the term “Тазики” and the entire comment is carefully examined both in its content and social, cultural and historical context, it's clear that the comment was a mere plea for protection of Armenian heritage and culture. Therefore, this particular word and the entire comment cannot be deemed as a dangerous or hate speech. “Тазики” may be considered to somewhat extent as distasteful or controversial term, but it certainly does not cross the line into hate speech. I urge you to reverse your decision.

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00085

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Lana

Commenter's first name

Akopyan

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

N/A

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

The post in question falls squarely within political speech and does not constitute hate speech. The post, when viewed in historical context, attempts to draw attention to the current imminent risk of Azerbaijan's state-sponsored attempts at Armenian cultural erasure. The decision to remove this post for hate speech must be reversed.

Full Comment

The post in question falls squarely within political speech and does not constitute hate speech. As explained by Facebook on multiple occasions, the platform permits its users to disagree and debate political issues.[1] User speech crosses into hate speech when it includes an attack on people “based on what are known as their ‘protected characteristics,’” for example, race, ethnicity, national origin, and the like. The user in this post is providing poignant political criticism of Azerbaijan’s state sponsored program of destroying Armenian cultural and religious sites and rewriting history. Thus, the speech is directed to Azerbaijan’s government and not related to nationality. Notably, Azerbaijan promotes these cultural erasure and destruction endeavors via social media.[2] The fact that this post was even reported has to do with Azerbaijan’s known use of Troll Farms, which among other things, promote propaganda for Armenian culture erasure and revisionist history. As BuzzFeed recently reported, a whistleblower at Facebook exposed how Facebook ignored massive “manipulation of its platforms by political parties and heads of government,” “called the fake behavior in Azerbaijan her ‘greatest unfinished business,’ and criticized Facebook for taking a year to investigate her findings.”[3] She described that “close to 8,000 pages used in the operation were set up to look like personal profiles and were used to leave comments ... to create a perception of

widespread criticism of some views and widespread support of others.” These troll farm bots are also used to report en masse every critical post of Azerbaijan, as well as promote propaganda for Armenian cultural erasure and revisionist history. After the likely en masse bot reporting of this post, Facebook likely removed it due to its failure to understand the historical context of these statements. First, the user states that “Baku was built by Armenians,” which is part of the history that Azerbaijan has been hiding and rewriting, to remove any remnants of Armenian existence and contribution. Prior to the Baku and Sumgait pogroms carrying out ethnic cleansing of Armenians, there were over 200,000 Armenians living in Baku.[4] Since Baku’s inception, Armenians contributed to the city in important ways, from developing Baku’s prosperous oil industry, to the contributions of the many prominent Armenian architects.[5] Armenian oil engineers and businessmen played a key role in developing Baku’s prosperous economy and oil infrastructure. Ivan Mirzoev drilled the first successful well in 1871. Alexander Mantashev established majority control over the total stock of oil and oil content in the Caspian Sea and financed the construction of an east–west pipeline which extended 500 miles from Baku to the Black Sea. Around 1888, out of the 54 oil companies in Baku, only two major oil companies were Azeri owned.[5] Armenian architects designed much of the essential infrastructure, cultural structures, and Armenian churches in Baku. Freidun Aghalyan constructed railroad bridges, gymnasium, the Treasury palace and Workers House between 1903–1921. Nikolai Bayev constructed more than 100 buildings in Baku. Hovhannes Katchaznouni built a hospital, apartment houses, a hotel, and assisted in the construction of the Saint Thaddeus and Bartholomew Armenian Cathedral. Alexander Rotinoff and Gavriil Ter-Mikelov constructed the Armenian church of Thadeus and Bartholomew in 1901. There was also Vartan Stepan Sarkisov, Martin Levon Tovmasyan, Gavril Mikhaylovich Ter-Mikelov and many others.[6] Next, the user questions where the churches have gone. Indeed, Azerbaijan has destroyed almost all the Armenian churches throughout Azerbaijan. The user accurately states that Azerbaijan has in the past and is currently destroying churches. There were previously dozens of churches destroyed and some repurposed.[7] Today, only two Armenian churches remain in Baku and one of them has been repurposed into a library, with its crosses removed. This destruction is continuing as you are reading this, now in Artsakh (Armenian indigenous lands, now overtaken by Azerbaijan). As the Wall Street Journal reported on November 18, 2020, “[a]ncient national treasures in Artsakh are at risk of complete erasure.”[8] Azerbaijan does not even attempt to hide its plan to continue Armenian cultural erasure.[9] In his recent speech, President Aliyev of Azerbaijan alleged that Armenians have no historical claims to the region because the churches belonged to ancient Azerbaijani forebears and had been “Armenianized.”[10] Facebook must allow for such posts to be shared to bring light to the current imminent risk of Armenian cultural erasure. Humanity has a duty to protect these national treasures before they are gone, like countless others before them. Removing these types of

posts for hate speech results in actual harm to Armenian heritage and this decision must be reversed. [1]<https://about.fb.com/news/2017/06/hard-questions-hate-speech> <https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-enforcement-hate-speech-rules-mistakes>[2]<https://www.ombuds.am/images/files/2032f021fe81176414a649d588ad0e86.pdf> [3]<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/craigsilverman/facebook-azerbaijan-troll-farm> <https://nymag.com/developing/2018/10/azerbaijan-trolls-q-a-katy-pearce.html> [4]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Anti-Armenian_pogroms [5]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenians_in_Baku<https://youtu.be/y5ZwGKrER6A> <https://youtu.be/KbpdHnBmDz0>[6]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Baku#List_of_architects_of_Baku [7]https://ru.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Список_армянских_храмов_на_территории_современного_Азербайджана [8]<https://www.wsj.com/articles/cultural-heritage-in-the-crosshairs-once-more-11605731198> [9]<https://flnka.ru/digest/6434-rouben-galichian-on-how-azerbaijan-falsifies-history.html><https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/10/08/eliminating-armenians-from-artsakh>[10]<https://twitter.com/presidentaz/status/1331624720597458944>

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00092

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Withheld

Commenter's first name

Withheld

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Withheld

Organization

Yes

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

- Referring to Azerbaijanis with the Russian word “тазики” does not meet the bar of hate speech. This colloquial term is not on par with egregious, illicit and overt slurs. The term simply does not infer or insinuate hate;
- The remaining parts of the post fall squarely within the realm of politically motivated speech. For example, “Azerbaijani aggression” refers to numerous documented cases of government-sponsored cultural erasure and ethnic cleansing throughout history. This is not hate speech just as a composed response to Jewish Holocaust or Armenian Genocide denial is not hate speech; and
- Abridging free speech sets a dangerous precedent of stifling an open exchange of ideas, including those that draw attention to acts of aggression.

Full Comment

The post in question falls squarely within political speech and does not constitute hate speech. As explained by Facebook on multiple occasions, the platform permits its users to disagree and debate political issues.[1] User speech crosses into hate speech when it includes an attack on people “based on what are known as their ‘protected characteristics,’” for example, race, ethnicity, national origin, and the like. The user in this post is providing poignant political criticism of Azerbaijan’s state sponsored program of destroying Armenian cultural and religious sites and rewriting history. Thus, the speech is directed to Azerbaijan’s government and not related to nationality. Notably, Azerbaijan promotes these cultural erasure and destruction endeavors via social media.[2] The fact that this post was even reported has to do with Azerbaijan’s known use of Troll Farms, which among other things,

promote propaganda for Armenian culture erasure and revisionist history. As BuzzFeed recently reported, a whistleblower at Facebook exposed how Facebook ignored massive “manipulation of its platforms by political parties and heads of government,” “called the fake behavior in Azerbaijan her ‘greatest unfinished business,’ and criticized Facebook for taking a year to investigate her findings.”[3] She described that “close to 8,000 pages used in the operation were set up to look like personal profiles and were used to leave comments ... to create a perception of widespread criticism of some views and widespread support of others.” These troll farm bots are also used to report en masse every critical post of Azerbaijan, as well as promote propaganda for Armenian cultural erasure and revisionist history. After the likely en masse bot reporting of this post, Facebook likely removed it due to its failure to understand the historical context of these statements. First, the user states that “Baku was built by Armenians,” which is part of the history that Azerbaijan has been hiding and rewriting, to remove any remnants of Armenian existence and contribution. Prior to the Baku and Sumgait pogroms carrying out ethnic cleansing of Armenians, there were over 200,000 Armenians living in Baku.[4] Since Baku’s inception, Armenians contributed to the city in important ways, from developing Baku’s prosperous oil industry, to the contributions of the many prominent Armenian architects.[5] Armenian oil engineers and businessmen played a key role in developing Baku’s prosperous economy and oil infrastructure. Ivan Mirzoev drilled the first successful well in 1871. Alexander Mantashev established majority control over the total stock of oil and oil content in the Caspian Sea and financed the construction of an east–west pipeline which extended 500 miles from Baku to the Black Sea. Around 1888, out of the 54 oil companies in Baku, only two major oil companies were Azeri owned.[5] Armenian architects designed much of the essential infrastructure, cultural structures, and Armenian churches in Baku. Freidun Aghalyan constructed railroad bridges, gymnasium, the Treasury palace and Workers House between 1903–1921. Nikolai Bayev constructed more than 100 buildings in Baku. Hovhannes Katchaznouni built a hospital, apartment houses, a hotel, and assisted in the construction of the Saint Thaddeus and Bartholomew Armenian Cathedral. Alexander Rotinoff and Gavriil Ter-Mikelov constructed the Armenian church of Thaddeus and Bartholomew in 1901. There was also Vartan Stepan Sarkisov, Martin Levon Tovmasyan, Gavril Mikhaylovich Ter-Mikelov and many others.[6] Next, the user questions where the churches have gone. Indeed, Azerbaijan has destroyed almost all the Armenian churches throughout Azerbaijan. The user accurately states that Azerbaijan has in the past and is currently destroying churches. There were previously dozens of churches destroyed and some repurposed.[7] Today, only two Armenian churches remain in Baku and one of them has been repurposed into a library, with its crosses removed. This destruction is continuing as you are reading this, now in Artsakh (Armenian indigenous lands, now overtaken by Azerbaijan). As the Wall Street Journal reported on November 18, 2020, “[a]ncient national treasures in Artsakh are at risk of complete erasure.”[8]

Azerbaijan does not even attempt to hide its plan to continue Armenian cultural erasure.[9] In his recent speech, President Aliyev of Azerbaijan alleged that Armenians have no historical claims to the region because the churches belonged to ancient Azerbaijani forebears and had been “Armenianized.”[10] Facebook must allow for such posts to be shared to bring light to the current imminent risk of Armenian cultural erasure. Humanity has a duty to protect these national treasures before they are gone, like countless others before them. Removing these types of posts for hate speech results in actual harm to Armenian heritage and this decision must be reversed. [1]<https://about.fb.com/news/2017/06/hard-questions-hate-speech> <https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-enforcement-hate-speech-rules-mistakes>[2]<https://www.ombuds.am/images/files/2032f021fe81176414a649d588ad0e86.pdf> [3]<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/craigsilverman/facebook-azerbaijan-troll-farm> <https://nymag.com/developing/2018/10/azerbaijan-trolls-q-a-katy-pearce.html> [4]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Anti-Armenian_pogroms [5]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armenians_in_Baku<https://youtu.be/y5ZwGKrER6A> <https://youtu.be/KbpdHnBmDz0>[6]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Architecture_of_Baku#List_of_architects_of_Baku [7]https://ru.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Список_армянских_храмов_на_территории_современного_Азербайджана [8]<https://www.wsj.com/articles/cultural-heritage-in-the-crosshairs-once-more-11605731198> [9]<https://flnka.ru/digest/6434-rouben-galichian-on-how-azerbaijan-falsifies-history.html><https://publicorthodoxy.org/2020/10/08/eliminating-armenians-from-artsakh>[10]<https://twitter.com/presidentaz/status/133162472059745894>

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00097

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Chris

Commenter's first name

Parnagian

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Comment submitted on own behalf
(not on behalf of any organization)

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

The subject post is not hate speech. Each part of the subject post is either an historical fact or a well-founded rhetorical question, and the Russian word "т.а.з.и.к.и" allegedly used in the post is merely a Russian language colloquialism referring to Azeris and does not rise to the level of hate speech as defined in Facebook's policy. The post should be forthwith reinstated by Facebook.

Full Comment

Re: Public Comment in support of Reversal of Facebook Decision to Remove Facebook Post regarding Armenians and Baku (Case No. 2020-003-FB-UA) Ladies and Gentlemen: I refer to your case no. 2020-003-FBUA (the "Case") and to your Oversight Board Terms of Public Comment (the "Terms"). Also, I refer herein to the post (which is the subject of the Case) as the "Armenians in Baku Post" or simply the "Post". Capitalized terms used but not defined herein shall have the meanings ascribed thereto in the Terms. Facebook should not have taken down the Armenians in Baku Post. You should immediately reverse Facebook's decision and direct Facebook to reinstate the Post. This is because the Post is not "hate speech" as defined in Article 12 of Facebook's Community Standards -- not Tier 1, not Tier 2 and not Tier 3 hate speech. In the succeeding paragraphs, I explain why. First, you say that the user (i.e., the party who posted on Facebook the Armenians in Baku Post) said that Baku "was built by Armenians." Obviously, that statement can't be reasonably understood by anyone to mean that Armenians created 100% of everything at Baku. Rather, taken in proper context, it must be reasonably understood to mean that Armenians played a central role in the building of the city. That's a fact, and therefore that aspect of the Post should not have been deemed by

Facebook to be hate speech. There are myriad examples of how Armenians -- in engineering and architecture, in parliament, in academia, in business -- were key players in the building of Baku, and here are just three: (i) ethnic Armenians (including Alexander Mantashev and the Mirzoev brothers) were part and parcel of the development of the Baku oil industrial starting in the 1800s; (ii) ethnic Armenian Nikolay Bayev was the architect of Azerbaijan opera house; and (iii) multiple Armenian churches were built at Baku, to wit, The Church of the Holy Mother of God, which was demolished in 1992 after the Armenians were killed or kicked out of Baku during 1990 pogroms against them, and St. Gregory the Illuminator Church, which is now reportedly being used not for Armenian Oriental Orthodox church services but instead as a "presidential library." (Of course, there was in fact a pogrom against the Armenians in Baku. I know this because credible reporting on the subject is plentiful and because, as an attorney, I represented a husband and wife who were victims of that very same pogrom and who applied for and won asylum (i.e., permanent resident status) in the United States based on that persecution.) Second, and speaking of churches, you say that the user asked in the Post "where the churches have gone"? As noted above, one church was demolished and another is used by non-Armenians for non-religious purposes. A third church -- St. Thaddeus and Bartholomew Cathedral -- designed by an Armenian, Hovhannes Kajazuni, who according to reports I have read had worked in construction for the provincial government in Baku -- was built before the founding of the Soviet Union and was reportedly razed by the Soviets in the 1930s. I understand that a music academy was then erected on top of the Cathedral's site. In light of this, how can the user's question (which question, based on your summary of the Post, clearly appears to be rhetorical) be hate speech when the question had a bona fide foundation and was clearly designed to illustrate the point that Armenian churches were destroyed? Third, according to your summary of the Post, the user said that Armenians are restoring mosques. It's true. Case in point: the Govhar Agha Mosque located in the town of Sushu in Nagorno-Karabagh. The mosque was renovated by Armenians in Sushu. No one can credibly deny that. Fourth, the user said that the "т.а.з.и.к.и" are destroying churches. Based on my conversations with Russian speaking lawyers whom I respect, saying "т.а.з.и.к.и" is not hate speech at all but a colloquial way to refer to Azeris. As I understand it, the word is not necessarily flattering but it's not hate speech as defined by Facebook, in part because it does not rise to the level of an expression of contempt (i.e., it's not an expression which is intolerant or connotes disgust). Fifth, you say the user said Azerbaijan has no history. That is neither hate speech under the Facebook policy nor hate speech under any common understanding of the ambit of the expression "hate speech." What the user was getting at, in my view, is that Azerbaijan, when compared to its neighbors like Iran, Georgia and Armenia, has a comparatively short history. Based on my research, the term "Azerbaijan" was only invented in the 20th century (when the republic of Azerbaijan was founded). With all due respect, Facebook made a

mistake here. I hope it is immediately corrected by the Oversight Board. Yours truly, Christopher P. Parnagian

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00103

Public comment number

Europe

Region

Narmin

Commenter's first name

Jabiyeva

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Central European University

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

2020-003-FB-UA Oversight Board 8 December 2020 Dear Sir/Madam, By way of introduction, I am Narmin, lawyer from Azerbaijan. I firmly believe that the post described under case number 2020-003-FB-UA (the “post”) violates Facebook’s Hate Speech Policy and shall not be restored. Below are my arguments: 1. The post does not contain someone else's hate speech for the purpose of raising awareness or educating others. Facebook’s Hate Speech policy allows posts containing someone else’s hate speech for the purpose of raising awareness. However, in all cases, people should clearly indicate their intent. Where the intention is unclear, Facebook may remove the content. The post does not clearly show that it is someone else’s hate speech. On the contrary, the post contains Tier-1 and Tier-2 content, as well as the disguised common slur for Azerbaijanis (used to depict Azerbaijanis). There are no references stating that the author is raising awareness on the hate speech used against Azerbaijanis. As the used words are clearly targeted at Azerbaijanis, they cannot be treated as used “self-referentially” or “in an empowering way”. Meanwhile, the author claims that the post was aimed to “demonstrate the destruction of cultural and religious monuments”. Facebook’s Hate Speech policy does not have clauses allowing raising awareness on any topic by using Tier-1 and Tier-2 content, as well as the slurs, which are not used self-referentially and are not someone else’s hate speech. As the post violated Hate Speech policy rather than false information clauses, I will not focus on the material side of the post. Meanwhile, the amount of hate speech in this post clearly outweighs any allegedly educational content contained therein. 2. The post represents Tier-1 content based on Facebook’s Hate Speech Policy The post contains dehumanising speech: “the "т.а.з.и.к.и" (please see my explanation on the slur) are destroying churches”, “Azerbaijani aggression” and “vandalism”. These words are generalisations associating destruction of churches, aggression and vandalism with

all Azerbaijanis. 3. The post also represents Tier-2 content based on Facebook's Hate Speech Policy. The post also implicitly conveys the message of inferiority by stating that "the "т.а.з.и.к.и" (meaning Azerbaijanis) have no history". 4. The post "negatively targets people with slurs, where slurs are defined as words commonly used as insulting labels for the above-listed characteristics". The user attempted to disguise a famous slur "азики" (used to label Azerbaijanis) as "т.а.з.и.к.и". This was probably written in this way, so that the Facebook algorithm does not recognise this word as a slur. Meanwhile, "т.а.з.и.к.и" (literally "bowls") itself is humiliating, as it is often used as a rhyme word for "азики". Summarizing the above, the post clearly represents direct attack on Azerbaijanis based on our national origin. 5. Context matters. As Richard Allan noted in his article "Hard Questions: Who Should Decide What Is Hate Speech in an Online Global Community?", in the context of the conflict it felt important for the team to restrict the use of hate speech/slurs. As you might know, people of Armenia and Azerbaijan are deeply traumatised by the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh in general and the recent war in particular. For 30 years, there have been almost no contact between whole generations of Armenians and Azerbaijanis. The dialogue is much needed to help with healing the wounds and to contribute to the peace in the region. However, absolutely toxic information is going on in Social Media (including Facebook). Despite Facebook's efforts, the level of hate speech is just unbearable. In this particularly sensitive time, we are fragile more than ever. Hateful posts will induce more hateful words in this vicious cycle of mutual hatred. When it comes to the alleged intention to raise awareness on destruction of monuments, this could have been done by placing the photo and politely asking Azerbaijanis to explain what we know about this church and its fate. That simple. I firmly believe that at least a couple of Azerbaijanis would have responded with evidences and pictures. This might have led to fruitful discussion. On the contrary, the post full of hate speech towards Azerbaijanis will trigger more hate speech and more trauma. My grandparents were from Agdam, now a ghost town, razed to the ground and called "Hiroshima of the Caucasus". My relatives are internally displaced people. My ancestors are from Shusha city (I have a genealogy tree up to the 18th century). Reading this post hurts a lot, because of the hatred towards me as Azerbaijani and my nation. For the past two months, I have engaged in numerous conversations with Armenians and have never used any hate speech. Only this way we would eventually learn to empathise and to understand each other's point of view. I strongly condemn hate speech in any form whatsoever irrespective of the nationality. I kindly ask Facebook to contribute to peace by restricting hate speech. Only polite and respectful dialogue can contribute to peace. Asking polite questions and doing research will eventually help to raise awareness. Not hate speech. Thank you for your time and consideration. Best regards, Narmin Jabiyeva Central European University LLM in Comparative Constitutional Law

Link to Attachment

[Attachment PC-00103](#)

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00108

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Daniel

Commenter's first name

Gainor

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Media Research Center

Organization

Yes

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

If Facebook wants to connect people from around the world, then those people need to be able to comment on the wars being wages against them. This post would also fall under the news exemption.

Full Comment

The conflict between Armenia and its neighbors is a horrifying reminder that history repeats itself. That means actions taken more than 100 years ago still resonate today, especially the genocide of the Armenian people at the hands of the Turks. Roughly 1.5-2 million Armenian Christians were killed in the 20th Century's first genocide. It was an attempt not just to wipe out a people, but to erase their history and their faith. Yet when Azerbaijan invaded Artsakh or the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, once more those harsh memories of genocide came to the surface. Once more Armenian Christians saw their homes and towns destroyed and their churches violated. It would be outlandish to say Armenians or their supporters can't criticize such a criminal invasion. And yes, it would be wrong to say people from Azerbaijan or their supporters can't support it. It is a major regional conflict. Facebook can't simply delete its existence and act like nothing is going on. It is the responsibility of the Oversight Board to allow such freedom on the platform. Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously stated, "Some people's idea of [free speech] is that they are free to say what they like, but if anyone says anything back, that is an outrage." Yet, as Churchill so eloquently alludes, free speech entails protecting not only the speech of those with which we agree but also those with which we disagree. In this case, that would apply to both sides of this horrible conflict. Facebook also includes in its rules an exemption: the

“Newsworthiness exemption.” Facebook’s VP of Global Affairs and Communications Nick Clegg said about the exemption, “This means that if someone makes a statement or shares a post which breaks our community standards we will still allow it on our platform if we believe the public interest in seeing it outweighs the risk of harm.” The Facebook Oversight Board should enable Facebook to afford its users nothing less than the free speech and free exercise of religion embodied in the First Amendment as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court. That standard, the result of centuries of American jurisprudence, would allow both sides to speak their minds without trampling on free speech liberties.

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00112

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Grigor

Commenter's first name

Sargsyan

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

UC San Diego

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

My comment is in support of the user who made the original post. I intent to fairly defend the user's use of the Facebook platform to bring awareness to the destruction and vandalism taking place in Azerbaijan while also analyzing the words used to demonstrate the absence of hate speech in the construction of the user's post.

Full Comment

The user indicated in their appeal to the Oversight Board that they are bringing attention to the destruction and vandalism of cultural monuments within the country of Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, the incidents this user is referring to are not isolated incidents and they are not being committed by some arbitrary or ambiguous group [<https://hyperallergic.com/482353/a-regime-conceals-its-erasure-of-indigenous-armenian-culture/>]. First, The user non-rhetorically asks the question "where the churches have gone"? This first line references the widescale destruction, vandalism, and erasure of Armenian cultural and religious sites that have been carried out by Azerbaijani soldiers and the Azerbaijani government in what The Guardian has called "the worst cultural genocide of the 21st century" [<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/mar/01/monumental-loss-azerbaijan-cultural-genocide-khachkars>]. In reference to Baku, the Armenian Church of Baku was built in 1863, but was abandoned after the Baku pogrom in 1990. The crosses of the church have since been destroyed and the church itself converted into a billiard hall [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Armenian_Church,_Baku#:~:text=60.,against%20Armenians%20of%20January%201990.]. Thomas de Waal confirms this in his 2003

book Black Garden that the church "remains a gutted shell eleven years after it was burned in December 1989; the cross has been removed from the belfry, now used as a pool hall." The statement "Baku was built by Armenians" is a reference to the large Armenian population that existed in Baku in the 15th Century as documented by the Persian historian Hamdallah Mustawfi or perhaps the brief independence of Baku from the Russian Empire in 1917 which was led by the Armenian Stepan Shahumyan (Yes, Azerbaijan's pursuit of independence was spearheaded by an Armenian) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stepan_Shaumian]. Second, the user states "Armenians are restoring mosques on their land because it is part of their history". This is exemplified in the old city of Shushi, where the Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque was restored in 2019 by the Initiative for Development of Armenia (IDeA) Foundation [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoQszcz-TMU&ab_channel=IDeAFoundation]. Shushi is a cultural center of the region for hundreds of years and is home to Armenian churches as well as Persian and Azeri mosques. The user continues by saying that churches are currently being targeted and destroyed by Azeri forces. I believe this part warrants special attention because this is the chief concern regarding this appeal to the Oversight Board. Since the beginning of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh war, cultural and religious monuments were destroyed with intent such as Shushi's Ghazanchetsots Cathedral which was bombed twice in the same day, in the same spot by a precision drone strike [<https://armenianweekly.com/2020/10/08/shushis-ghazanchetsots-cathedral-bombed/>]. Even after the war, the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral was vandalized by Azeri soldiers and the bell tower and Dome of Shushi's St. John Mkrtych church was also destroyed [<https://en.armradio.am/2020/11/19/armenian-st-john-mkrtych-church-in-shushi-vandalized/>]. This vandalism and destruction can be interpreted as an attempt to erase all history of the land and the existence of the people who build these cultural and religious monuments, hence the user's statement "no history" [<https://www.panarmenian.net/eng/news/287991/>]. This user's content was removed on the basis of violating Facebook's Hate Speech policy. I believe that what this user wrote does not constitute hate speech. I believe that the user did indeed use the Facebook platform to speak against "Azerbaijani aggression" and "vandalism" in way that shouldn't be misconstrued as hate speech. I hope I succeeded in demonstrating how this user's words clearly brought awareness to the destruction of cultural and religious monuments in this particular corner of the world. We as a community should support and listen to these concerns when brought up even though it is uncomfortable knowing that bad things are happening.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00118

Public comment number

Europe

Region

Igor

Commenter's first name

Rozkladai

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

CEDEM

Organization

Yes

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

Comments provided by CEDEM and IMC following considerations which should be taken into account on the removal of posts or any other moderation of online expression made in the course of international or non-international armed conflicts. Considerations to the present case, we would like to underline that people should be provided with a space to express their grievances, especially in the extremely tense social environment, such as a long-lasting IAC. At the same time it's very important it's important to give a proper legal qualification of speech in terms of differentiation between "ordinary" hate speech and incitement to genocide, war crimes, etc. Also, it's important to consider a tendency of weaponization of information.

Full Comment

Public consultation provided on the case 2020-003-FB-UA Dear Colleagues, Centre for Democracy and Rule of Law, Ukraine (hereafter referred to as CEDEM) and the Independent Media Council, Ukraine (hereafter referred to as IMC) would like to use this opportunity to intervene in the OB case 2020-003-FB-UA. Given that the OB is, among other functions, entitled with providing Facebook with the recommendations regarding its community rules and policies, we would like to use the above mentioned case to bring the attention of the OB and Facebook to the following considerations which should be taken into account while deciding on the removal of posts or any other moderation of online expression made in the course of international or non-international armed conflicts (IAC and NIAC respectively): • While assessing any Facebook post or online expression related to ongoing conflict,

it is important to differentiate between IAC and NIAC in terms of likeliness of harm inflicted on the community/nation/individuals targeted by such expression. In both IAC and NIAC heightened emotions, mutual accusations (sometimes with references to real or pseudo-historical facts and experiences) and aggressive tone characterise almost any communication between the conflicting parties, verbal insult becomes a “new normal” in a conflict situation. In IAC such communication in most cases does not produce an effect of direct incitement in civilian environments, rather it serves as a possibility for the conflicting nations to let off some steam or to express long-standing grievances online. The real harm in IAC is mostly inflicted at the battlefield rather than within civilian spaces. In NIAC, however, one of the parties is usually a minority group, often already marginalised and vulnerable, co-existing in joint space with the hostile majority, and harmful speech directed at such a group can have serious consequences even in civilian spaces, outside of the battlefield, often subjecting those who do not take direct part in hostilities to abuse and violence. • Due consideration should be given to a proper legal qualification of speech in terms of differentiation between “ordinary” hate speech (which can be expressed in the form of harsh political criticism, provocative artistic speech or controversial historical debates); incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence; and incitement to genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity as the gravest form of hate speech. This graduated approach is important in assessing cases in IAC or NIAC settings. In IAC it is exactly the gravest form of hate speech – incitement to genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes – that should be immediately addressed and moderated while less serious forms of harmful speech may not require such an urgent and decisive action. In NIAC, for the reasons of its internality and inherent difficulties in differentiation between combatants and civilian population, the threshold of harm should be lower since even milder forms of hate speech can result in actual violence against civilian population, especially where one of the conflicting parties is related to a minority group. • Another aspect to be considered is a widespread tendency of weaponization of information in the course of the current conflicts, including various information operations. The ongoing IAC between Russia and Ukraine can provide plenty of examples. In this regard, complaints mechanisms on Facebook or other social media are weaponized too. Massive complaints against certain posts are sometimes initiated by bots and trolls rather than real people, and removal of posts of the opposing party to the conflict becomes a kind of “online victory” for the complainants. Pushing for the right narrative both internally and internationally and suppressing the narratives of the opponents is an indispensable element of modern conflicts. • The most important success factor in achieving human rights compliant, reasonable and fair moderation of online expression on Facebook in terms of IAC or NIAC is employment of both knowledgeable and impartial moderators. While moderators should have sufficient knowledge about the local contexts, history, languages and specificities of a conflict situation, they should not

be in any possible way affiliated with the conflicting parties: either politically or because of nationality/citizenship(s) (including previous citizenships), ethnicity or residence. • Applying the aforementioned considerations to the present case, we would like to underline that people should be provided with a space to express their grievances, especially in the extremely tense social environment, such as a long-lasting IAC. Therefore, if impugned expression cannot reasonably lead to a serious violent consequence for civilians outside of the battlefield (as we can suggest in the present case), –such expression should not be qualified as a prohibited one. More specifically, if an expression of harsh criticism towards cultural policies or socio-political decisions cannot directly incite civilian individuals to engage in violent actions against the group targeted by this expression, – it can hardly be interpreted as a serious form of online hate speech requiring urgent removal. In particular, political criticism normally warrants a higher degree of protection against moderation. We are convinced that the points outlined above together with other possible related considerations justify elaboration (in consultations with civil society and legal experts) of a specific set of community standards/moderation rules covering online expression in IAC and NIAC. Both CEDEM and IMC would be glad to offer their assistance in developing such standards/rules. Sincerely yours, Olesia Kholopik, Director, CEDEM Igor Rozkladai, Deputy Director, CEDEM Antonina Cherevko, Head of IMC

Link to Attachment

[Attachment PC-00118](#)

2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

PC-00140

Public comment number

Europe

Region

Dr Murtaza

Commenter's first name

Shaikh

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues

Organization

Yes

Response on behalf of organization

Short summary provided by the commenter

General principles to interpret online hate speech in accordance with the protection of minorities under international and regional human rights law. I have also commented on 3 of the cases relating to hate speech, one of which has been withdrawn, focusing particularly on legitimate minority rights and the importance of referring to a broader set of protected characteristics in line with the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, 2019.

Full Comment

Generally, ethnic, religious, linguistic and national minorities as identified under the Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities are the most likely targets of online hate speech. Moreover, hate speech against minorities leads to severer incidences of real-world harm, ultimately culminating in ethnic cleansing and genocide. I would urge the Board to take account of these instruments along with the jurisprudence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the reports of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on National Minorities. This will be essential to protect the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, who happen to be minorities, thus allowing the Board to apply a comprehensive approach to adjudicating hate speech cases that is not limited to just a consideration of ICCPR Articles 19 and 20, and ECHR Articles 14 and 17. The Guidelines of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities should also be referred to. Lastly and crucially, the definition of hate speech in Facebook's Community Guidelines should incorporate a more extensive and non-exhaustive list

of protected characteristics in line with the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech 2019, which states: “[A]ny kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor.” The UN’s detailed guidance elaborates ‘identity factor’ can include “language; political or other opinion; belief; national or social origin; property; birth or other status, including indigenous origin or identity; caste; disability; health status; migrant or refugee status; place of residence; economic and social situation; marital and family status; sexual orientation; gender identity; intersex status; age; albinism; and HIV status.” The UN’s detailed guidance also calls for greater “focus on those groups in situations of vulnerability due to entrenched or historic stigmatization, discrimination, long-standing conflicts...and exclusion and marginalization from the political, economic and social life of the society.” In relation to Case 2020-001-FB-UA, hate speech should not be tolerated towards minorities, nor the situation of minorities be used to justify or advocate hatred or violence against majorities. It is also immaterial whether the quote is rightly attributed to Dr Mahatir Mohamad. However Dr Mohamad’s status as a prominent international political personality with a considerable following is of importance. Furthermore, the content of the purported statement, which is an unqualified support of “a right to...kill millions of French people” should be classified as hate speech and potentially an incitement to violence. Despite the absence of intent, the framing of extreme violence as a right given the status of the speaker, reach, and nature of the content posed a serious enough risk of real world harm to justify removal. It was a user who shared this statement and not the purported speaker. In this regard, I would advise the Board to adopt the principle of deferring to the inherent intent of the reported statement unless the reporter qualifies their post in drawing explicit attention to its reprehensibility. In relation to Case 2020-002-FB-UA, the plight of one minority should not be used to undermine attention given to the plight of another. Social media is replete with posts that highlight the inconsistency of responses and dangerously oversimplify complex factors and circumstances. Taking of life can never be justified or defended under any circumstances, whether inflicted on those belonging to minorities or by foreign terrorist non-State actors seeking to worsen minority-majority relations through violence against innocent civilians. However, rather than justify terrorist acts, the user is raising the hypocrisy in response to loss of human life. Further, to establish hate speech in accordance with Facebook’s Community Standards and the UN Strategy, a group with a protected characteristic must be the target of an attack. Such a protected group is not easily identifiable in this case. The implicit idea behind the post that Muslim lives are worth less than French lives may constitute a flawed and uncomfortable opinion, yet still be within the bounds of the right to freedom of expression. In relation to Case 2020-003-FB-UA, it is notable that

Azerbaijan has a Christian minority amounting to approximately five percent of the population. With regards to context, Armenia and Azerbaijan have just ended a military confrontation with Armenia ceding some territory to Azerbaijan. There have been anxieties by Christians in those territories as to the non-denial “in community with the other members of their group...to profess and practice their own religion”. Lastly, the Board should appreciate that right to have, maintain and use places of religious worship is an established right of those belonging to religious minorities. As such, regardless of the veracity of the claims made in the post relating to the destruction of churches, concern about such actions is within the ambit of legitimate minority concerns. Furthermore, there needs to be a protected group targeted. This post seems to be targeted at the Azerbaijani Government rather than the Azerbaijani people. Ascertaining whether hate speech has occurred in this case hinges on the proper meaning and connotation of the term “Т.а.з.и.к.и” and whether this term targets a particular group on the basis of protected characteristics.

Link to Attachment

[Attachment PC-00140](#)



Public Comment Appendix for
2020-003-FB-UA

Case number

End of public comments