



## Public Comment Appendix for

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

Case description

In December 2020, a Facebook user in the United States posted a comment containing an adaptation of the ["two buttons" meme](#). This meme featured the same split-screen cartoon from the original meme, but with the cartoon character's face substituted for a Turkish flag. The cartoon character has their right hand on their head and appears to be sweating. Above the cartoon character, in the other half of the split-screen, there are two red buttons with corresponding labels, in English: "The Armenian Genocide is a lie" and "The Armenians were terrorists who deserved it". The meme was preceded and followed by "thinking face" emoji.

The user's comment was in response to a post containing an image of a person wearing a niqab with overlay text in English saying: "Not all prisoners are behind bars." At this point, the Board does not have access to all of the intervening comments, and the meme may have been a response to one of those intervening comments.

Facebook removed the post under its [Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard](#) after one report from another Facebook user. Under this standard, Facebook removes content that "targets victims of serious physical or emotional harm," including "explicit attempts to mock victims and mark as cruel implicit attempts, many of which take the form of memes and GIFs." Subsequently, Facebook reclassified its removal to fall under its [Hate Speech Community Standard](#).

The user states in their appeal to Facebook that "[h]istorical events should not be censored" and that their comment was not meant to offend but to point out "the irony of a particular historical event." The user also speculates that Facebook misinterpreted their comment as an attack. The user also states that even if the content invokes "religion and war", it is not a "hot button issue." The user also finds Facebook and its policies overly restrictive and argues that "[h]umour like many things is subjective and something offensive to one person may be funny to another."

The Board would appreciate public comments that address:

- Was Facebook's decision to remove the post consistent with Facebook's Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard, specifically the rule against explicit and implicit attempts to mock victims?

- Additionally or alternatively, was Facebook's decision to remove the post consistent with Facebook's Hate Speech Community Standard, for example its rule on mocking victims of a hate crime?
- Whether Facebook's decision to remove the post is consistent with the company's stated values and human rights responsibilities.
- Any specific insight from commenters with knowledge of the social, political and cultural context in Armenia, Turkey and diaspora communities regarding the likely intent and impact of the post.
- How Facebook can and should take humour and/or satire into account in enforcing its policies.
- Research on present-day discourse about the events referred to in the meme, including effects of suppressing this kind of speech, either at the initiative of Facebook or as a consequence of governmental action.



Public Comment Appendix for  
2021-005-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](mailto: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.



Public Comment Appendix for  
2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

23

Number of Comments

Regional Breakdown

0	0	4	0
Asia Pacific & Oceania	Central & South Asia	Europe	Latin America & Caribbean
1	0	15	
Middle East and North Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	United States & Canada	

**2021-005-FB-UA**

Case number

**PC-09998**

Public comment number

**United States and Canada**

Region

**Sandra**

Commenter's first name

**Yukman**

Commenter's last name

**English**

Commenter's preferred language

**DID NOT PROVIDE**

Organization

**No**

Response on behalf of organization

-----

Short summary provided by the commenter

**This warranted the action FB took to remove the content. Most simply, if someone is going to "joke " about death and most would not see it as a joke, it is not a joke.**

Full Comment

**First, a person who decides that "joking" about the deaths of people, does not deserve a place on this platform. Second, genocide is the most horrible form of mass killing and the can be no "joke" about it. Third, this meme suggests that if you think about it, maybe there are more people who need to be harmed. I too believe it can be realistically intended to be out interpreted to be a threat.**

Link to Attachment

**No Attachment**

**2021-005-FB-UA**

Case number

**PC-09999**

Public comment number

**United States and Canada**

Region

**Debra**

Commenter's first name

**Parmley**

Commenter's last name

**English**

Commenter's preferred language

**DID NOT PROVIDE**

Organization

**No**

Response on behalf of organization

-----

Short summary provided by the commenter

Facebook's decision to remove the post consistent with Facebook's Hate Speech Community Standard, for example its rule on mocking victims of a hate crime? Who is to say something is satire or using it as an excuse to avoid accountability. The referenced subject of genocide does not equate to any type of humor-dark, etc. A flagrant abuse towards human life is never a humorous subject, rather abhorrent in nature of actions against humanity.

Full Comment

Facebook's decision to remove the post consistent with Facebook's Hate Speech Community Standard, for example its rule on mocking victims of a hate crime? Who is to say something is satire or using it as an excuse to avoid accountability. The referenced subject of genocide does not equate to any type of humor-dark, etc. A flagrant abuse towards human life is never a humorous subject, rather abhorrent in nature of actions against humanity.

Link to Attachment

**No Attachment**

**2021-005-FB-UA**

Case number

**PC-10001**

Public comment number

**United States and Canada**

Region

**Dr. Brett**

Commenter's first name

**Prince**

Commenter's last name

**English**

Commenter's preferred language

**DID NOT PROVIDE**

Organization

**No**

Response on behalf of organization

-----

Short summary provided by the commenter

**Keep it up with potentially a warning.**

Full Comment

A strong effort should be made to actively prevent FB from being dragged into the untenable, divisive, and unprofitable position of acting as an international speech and image policing agency for current news and historical records. Allowing this offensive image is in support of important universal and American values of free speech, but it might be appropriate to also attach an "offensive" warning label and maybe a link mentioning 'different historical perspectives apply to this event', etc.

Link to Attachment

**No Attachment**

**2021-005-FB-UA**

Case number

**PC-10002**

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 believe the user who posted the meme did not violate Facebook's hate standards.**

Full Comment

It seems that the user's post was misinterpreted as a potential attack on victims of the mentioned historical event. However, it seems clear to me that the meme is specifically a political critique of Turkey's government and messaging, choosing certain narratives (or ignoring historical facts) when convenient or for political gain. Whether or not this accusation by the user is merited is an open question, but the user clearly had no intention to mock victims of the tragic events in Armenia. The decision to remove their post seems like an overreaction or mischaracterization by Facebook.

Link to Attachment

**No Attachment**



2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10004

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 do not believe that the meme should have been removed under Facebook's Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard nor its Hate Speech Community Standard. The meme in no way mocked victims of a hate crime. If there is a satirical post that attacks a political disposition, it should be Facebook's responsibility to take it down after identifying the truth of the post and who the post may actually affect. Facebook's decision here simply seems short-sighted.

Full Comment

The Armenian Genocide is a historical event that the majority of the Turkish government denies happened the way it actually occurred. If they agree that the genocide occurred, they believe that it was a necessary thing to do. The post in question attacks the Turkish government and the country's founding values for their denial of the event. It does reference a traumatic event, but the meme does not display the cruelty or horror from the event. Because it does not display any images from the event or show human or visual suffering, it cannot violate the Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard Guidelines. Regarding its reallocation to hate speech, the post simply does not display any hate speech. The post doesn't claim that the Armenian Genocide was a lie nor does it claim that they deserved what happened to them. Even if they did, that doesn't mean that qualifies as hate speech according to Facebook's guidelines. They simply claim that Turkish officials and the rhetoric of the country as a whole struggles with which position to take on the matter. My interpretation of the meme based on reading about it is that the meme targets the Turkish government and their inhumane treatment of the situation. So from my perspective, Facebook is actually doing a disservice to humanity by labeling this post as hate speech. Any dissenting opinion regarding Turkey's unfair treatment of the crime that they are proven to have committed should not be silenced. Humor is contextual. Comedy and Offensive statements walk a fine line

and should always be looked at individually. I don't think that there is a general rule that you can slap onto comedic posts and determine whether or not they can be considered to ban on Facebook. You have to analyze the effect they have as a whole and then evaluate whether or not the post was in poor taste. Facebook is essentially siding with the Turkish government and I think that violates what Facebook represents and Facebook's new position as a thought leader in human rights.

[Link to Attachment](#)

**No Attachment**

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10007

Public comment number

Europe

Region

Harutyun

Commenter's first name

Amirjanyan

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

DID NOT PROVIDE

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

-----

Short summary provided by the commenter

The meme does not mock victims of genocide, but mocks the denialism common in contemporary Turkey, that simultaneously says the genocide did not happen and that victims deserved it.

Full Comment

For many members of Gray Wolves and some other Turkish nationalists, when they are talking on a forum where violence is frowned upon, it is very common to say that the series of genocides against Christians and Yazidis did not happen. But when confronted, or when talking on Turkish language forums they often say that the Armenians/Greeks/Assyrians were terrorists who deserved to be killed. So this meme, as described, does not mock victims of genocide, but mocks the denialism common in contemporary Turkey, that simultaneously says the genocide did not happen and that victims deserved it. Grandparents of my grandfather were killed in 1915, and i am not offended by this meme. It's possible that there was other context changing the meaning, but it seems to be lost in the description given on oversight board. In general Facebook should not be micromanaging issues like this, it should provide tools for every user to apply moderation/filtering based on reports of people he trusts.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10009

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

The decision to remove the comment is not consistent with Facebook's Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard or Hate speech. The Meme is not mocking genocide victims but instead pointing out the hypocrisy of genocide perpetrators who continue to deny the Armenian Genocide. Frequently Armenians who speak out about the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire (modern day Turkey), are met with one of two responses: "The Genocide is a lie, it did not happen, Armenians did not perish" or "Armenians were terrorists who turned against the nation they lived in and deserved to die". Because both cannot be true, one cannot deny that a death took place and also assert that the death was justified, this meme pokes at that contradiction.

Full Comment

1. Was Facebook's decision to remove the post consistent with Facebook's Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard, specifically the rule against explicit and implicit attempts to mock victims? Answer: No, the decision is not consistent with Facebook's Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard. The Meme is not mocking genocide victims but instead pointing out the hypocrisy of genocide perpetrators who continue to deny the Armenian Genocide. Frequently Armenians who speak out about the Armenian Genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire (modern day Turkey), are met with one of two responses: "The Genocide is a lie, it did not happen, Armenians did not perish" or "Armenians were terrorists who turned against the nation they lived in and deserved to die". Because both cannot be true, one cannot deny that a death took place and also assert that the death was justified, this meme pokes at that contradiction. 2. Additionally or alternatively, was Facebook's decision to remove the post consistent with Facebook's Hate Speech Community Standard, for example its rule on mocking victims of a hate crime?

Answer: No, the meme does not mock victims of a hate crime. It mocks a contradictory statement victims of the Armenian Genocide have encountered. 3. Whether Facebook's decision to remove the post is consistent with the company's stated values and human rights responsibilities. Answer: No, Facebook's decision to remove the post is NOT consistent with the company's stated values and human rights responsibilities. Removing content calling out the denial of a genocide is contrary to the company's stated values. 4. Any specific insight from commenters with knowledge of the social, political and cultural context in Armenia, Turkey and diaspora communities regarding the likely intent and impact of the post. Answer: The likely intent of the post is to show the contradictory messaging that Armenians encounter from anti-Armenians (mainly Turks and Turkish allies) excusing away the Armenian Genocide, either by flat out denying it's existence OR by justifying why it had to take place (and worse that it was deserved). 5. How Facebook can and should take humor and/ or satire into account in enforcing its policies? Answer: Context is always key, as is knowledge on the topic of discussion and the possible points of tension. Humor when full of hate speech is still hate speech. In this case, it is not.

[Link to Attachment](#)

**No Attachment**

**2021-005-FB-UA**

Case number

**PC-10010**

Public comment number

**United States and Canada**

Region

**Lori**

Commenter's first name

**Chinitz**

Commenter's last name

**English**

Commenter's preferred language

**OGreat One**

Organization

**No**

Response on behalf of organization

-----

Short summary provided by the commenter

**The irony of this meme was missed, and it is crucial to understanding its intent**

Full Comment

“The Armenian Genocide is a lie” and “The Armenians were terrorists who deserved it” are two ways of justifying the Armenian Genocide, according to the person who created or shared this meme. Historically, Turkey has denied that there was a genocide against the Armenians. In fact, the eradication of a large portion of the Armenian population is a known historical fact. The person who shared this meme was saying, in essence, "Some Turks can't decide whether to deny our Holocaust or to say that it was justified." This in no way rises to the level of an offence that should be removed or restricted. Sometimes there is a misapprehension of irony. I myself have had two posts removed that addressed the Holocaust (neither containing objectionable imagery) as hate speech--even though I posted them as a Jew who wanted to bring attention to elements within contemporary society that threatened my faith community. If you are in need to verification of the validity of the Armenian Genocide, here are some key historical dates: February 1915: Talat Pasha tells the German ambassador it is time to conclude the “Armenian question.” The ruling Ottoman Central Committee discusses plans to “eliminate the Armenian people in its entirety.” April 24, 1915: Talat Pasha orders arrest of more than 200 Armenian intellectuals in Constantinople, and about 2,000 others follow. They are deported and many of them killed. April 1915 to May 1918: Ethnic cleansing of Armenians launched on vast scale with murders, looting, burning of villages, rapes, deportations. Western observers estimate more than one million are dead at the campaign’s end.

Link to Attachment

**No Attachment**

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10013

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 write this as a Jewish person who has relatives who died during the holocaust. Humor should be given wide latitude. the term "genocide is not universal" While I personally believe genocide did happen in armenia, the opinion has substancial opposition. If facebook were to censor this comment, facebook could also have to censor the genocide that china is committing on it's muslim minority, under the same logic. Censoring/removing content such as this could (in the longer run) serve to help ENABLE FUTURE GENOCIDES, by preventing people from learning about them

Full Comment

see above

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10016

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Caryn

Commenter's first name

Martinez

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

DID NOT PROVIDE

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

----

Short summary provided by the commenter

The Oversight Board's description of what occurred is confusing. It sounds like Facebook removed the wrong content.

Full Comment

According to the Oversight Board's description, the original post was critical of laws and/or societal pressures that force women to wear niqab. The Board doesn't provide the motive for the post, so there are many possibilities, including a woman or women who are fighting for their right to dress as they please. According to the Board's description, it sounds like this is the post that was removed. If this is the case, it should be reinstated. Apparently someone responded to the post that protests niqab with a comment denying the genocide of Armenians by Turkey. I can't imagine how this event relates to the post above. Whatever the reason for the comment, THIS is what should have been removed. Armenians WERE murdered en masse in the early 20th century, and all claims otherwise should be removed as dangerously false.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment



**2021-005-FB-UA**

Case number

**PC-10018**

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

**Looks like hate speech to me**

Full Comment

**The first part, about a lie, is just someone's opinion and should be allowed, even if wrong; but, saying a people deserve genocide certainly looks like hate speech to me. It didn't even seem an attempt at humor like the old joke about the lawyers.**

Link to Attachment

**No Attachment**

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10022

Public comment number

Europe

Region

Paloma

Commenter's first name

Viejo

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

National Anti-Bullying and Resource Centre No Dublin City

Organization

Response on behalf of organization

-----

Short summary provided by the commenter

The case is a clear case of Armenian Holocaust Denial and fits HS regulation. If we look closely at the two options that the author gives to the meme: 'The Armenian Genocide is a lie! The Armenians were terrorists who deserved,' we observe that both cases are a denial of the Holocaust. The first case is explicit, and the second a direct hate attack on the Armenian people', perhaps Kurdish if the meme has emerged in Turkey. Besides, the case also incurs in misinformation. The terrorist adjective is inaccurate and historically incorrect for the present case. The Armenian genocide occurred in the context of WWI, during which Armenians were massacred. Turkey's republic acknowledges the massacres but has not accepted the case of genocide.

Full Comment

Smith, Markusen, Lifton (1995) researched the Turkish efforts to deny the Armenian Genocide (1915-17), showing evidence of the Turkish maneuvers to construct the discourse of denial. In Turkey, oppression against Kurds and Armenia has manifested by different ways, such as forbidding language or cultural practices. It is only normal that, since unchallenged, expressions of oppression have found new avenues, such as memes on Facebook. The meme is not ironic, as the author claims, but an expression that perpetuates social subordination. In contrast, the Turkish Government continues denying the Armenian Holocaust, this is a subject matter widely researched and that fits into Holocaust definition, as such, and considering that Facebook explicitly forbids Holocaust Denial, I kindly suggest you include the Armenian case as part of the Holocaust Denial, under Hate speech regulation.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10023

Public comment number

Europe

Region

Chris

Commenter's first name

Gray

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

DID NOT PROVIDE

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

-----

Short summary provided by the commenter

The meme was a poor attempt to comment on the dilemma facing Turkey with regard to historical events. The difficulties around this decision highlight the problems facing moderators who need to understand historic and current events as well as differing standards of communication and humour.

Full Comment

I am a former FB content moderator, and also lived in Turkey for two years before moving to Dublin to work for FB. FB moderators are monitored by various metrics, and their decisions are audited for both "action" and "reason". In this case, FB has determined that someone took the right action for the wrong reason, and their quality scores will reflect that fact, with implications for their continued employment. I know from first-hand experience that FB considers "right action for the wrong reason" to be unacceptable. In an extreme case, it's equivalent to driving while drunk, but not crashing. The end result doesn't justify the bad decision. So FB's re-classification of the content is not really acceptable. The board should consider the original decision and the later re-classification as two separate cases. I note that the content was posted in the USA in English, so should have been evaluated by an American. In Dublin, I would routinely see content posted in the UK and Ireland, but was prohibited from working on content from other countries such as the USA. This leads to a situation where low-paid individuals with minimal training are required to make decisions about events which are hugely contentious in other parts of the world but have been posted by someone in their local "market". I remember seeing, for example, praise/support/representation of figures I have never heard of, and having to research them to learn that they are associated with some or other group that may or may not be engaged in violence for political or nationalist purposes in countries I know nothing about. I would then have to figure out whether Facebook designates those groups, individuals, or events in ways that

required me to apply specific policies. You may find it useful to ask FB what reference materials they make available for moderators to use when they come across unfamiliar situations. In this case, someone from eg Arizona has been required to make the right decision for the right reason about an event that happened a hundred years ago in a far-away country they may know nothing about. And another of the metrics applied is AHT - Average Handling Time. These decisions should take less than 30 seconds, with sanctions for moderators who don't reach their targets. Sending content to other market teams is generally not permitted either, as this delays the final decision, and impacts TAT - Turn Around Time. So an under-supported individual was under pressure to make a decision on something they can't reasonably be expected to know anything about. In this case, I believe the wrong decision was made. The content, in my view, is commentary on the dilemma facing the Turkish government in coming to terms with historical events. It doesn't mock anyone or offer any opinions about the legitimacy of any particular viewpoint. The commentary is not very sophisticated, and presented in terms that some people find humorous. I believe the user's intent is best described as satire, not mocking of the Armenian community, although this is not immediately obvious - especially for a moderator who doesn't have the good fortune to have lived in Turkey as I did. This raises the question of how policy is actually implemented by the front-line workers. Is it fair or reasonable to expect me, or any other person, to make snap decisions balancing complex social issues with differing cultural sensibilities and styles of interaction? I used to make 600 of these decisions a day, and was paid 12.98 euros per hour. I could tell you a hundred stories of content that could be interpreted in different ways, where the "right" answer was largely a matter of opinion. Any one of them could have been referred to this board, and deliberated over for weeks by highly-paid experts, but I was given 30 seconds and expected to achieve 98% accuracy. The board is making policy recommendations to Facebook, but not addressing the realities of implementing those policies. Every time you, or any NGO or politician, recommends "Facebook should do X," the end result is that yet more requirements are made of people who are already over-worked and under-supported. Every time you find that someone has made the wrong decision, someone who needs the work is in jeopardy of losing their job. I do hope that you will start to consider whether your judgements can realistically be implemented at scale. Academic discussions about policy are not useful if the people doing the work are overwhelmed with rules to follow and unrealistic requirements to have endless amounts of arcane knowledge.

[Link to Attachment](#)

No Attachment

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10028

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 believe that Facebook's decision to remove the post was consistent with Facebook's Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard, specifically the rule against explicit and implicit attempts to mock victims. I also think that the post meets the definition of hate speech, much as any mocking based on denial of historically verified genocide is. The removal was consistent with responsibility towards human rights.

Full Comment

I believe that Facebook's decision to remove the post was consistent with Facebook's Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard, specifically the rule against explicit and implicit attempts to mock victims. I also think that the post meets the definition of hate speech, such as any mocking based on denial of historically verified genocide is. The removal was consistent with responsibility towards human rights. My knowledge of the issues around the Armenian Genocide is based on articles in various publications, such as the New Yorker. It is definitely a Western, and in particularly American, perspective. However it does appear that the genocide definitely occurred. And that the alleged terrorism has been debunked. Given that, this does appear to me to be a pretty clear case of the removal being justifiable.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10029

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

According to Genocide Watch, denial is the final stage of genocide and “among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres.” In fact, Armenian Genocide denial has already led to at least 10 more genocidal massacres of Armenians.

Full Comment

According to Genocide Watch, denial is the final stage of genocide and “among the surest indicators of further genocidal massacres.” In fact, Armenian Genocide denial has already led to at least 10 more genocidal massacres of Armenians ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_massacres\\_of\\_Armenians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_massacres_of_Armenians)). Facebook, as world leader in the information transmission world, should heed that recommendation by prohibiting the denial of the Armenian Genocide for the same reason they now ban Holocaust denial. The attacks on the Armenian people are not an isolated incident but need to be viewed in a vacuum, as part of a historical continuum. It is a recognized fact by governments and parliaments of 32 countries, including the United States Senate, that in the waning days of World War I, the Young Turk leaders of the Ottoman Empire with the leadership of Taleat, Nouri and Enver Pashas, systematically killed 1.5 million Armenians and otherwise removed them from their ancestral lands now in Eastern Turkey. As he prepared to cleanse Germany of its Jewish population, Adolf Hitler queried “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?” 105 years later, the genocide continues. Turkey and Azerbaijan pay millions of dollars, funded by oil money and US and NATO money on an annual basis to lobbyists, public relations firms and others to advocate their false realities. But, through their current actions they reveal their true motivation and goals. Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently went so far as to publicly say that Turkey will “continue to fulfill this mission, which our grandfathers have carried out for centuries,” <https://youtu.be/Tk0Ezcyj666Q> Facebook’s decision to ban Holocaust denial was “supported by the well-documented rise in anti-Semitism globally and

the alarming level of ignorance about the Holocaust, especially among young people.” This reasoning can be easily applied to Turkey and Azerbaijan’s rampant anti-Armenian policies, and supports Facebook banning the denial of the Armenian Genocide and hate speech against Armenians (Armenophobia). Children in Azerbaijani schools are taught to hate Armenians. It is a crime in the Republic of Turkey to speak of the Armenian genocide truthfully. Today, Amnesty International reported that “Since mid-September, Turkish police carried out largescale dawn raids across Turkey in which dozens of politicians, political activists, lawyers, and other civil society actors were detained under ‘terrorism-related charges.’” ([https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR44/3221/2020/en/?fbclid=wAR2iachSxWCx2KqwRbNLgkOOaQ2SCF\\_TBWgYbAAwfODBY161e8nL80R\\_OpM](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR44/3221/2020/en/?fbclid=wAR2iachSxWCx2KqwRbNLgkOOaQ2SCF_TBWgYbAAwfODBY161e8nL80R_OpM)) This pattern is all too familiar to Armenians, who were subjected to the same treatment on April 24, 1915 when the Ottoman Empire rounded up Armenian business leaders, intellectuals, clergy and others, which kick-started the systemic government sponsored attempt to eliminate the Armenians. As world leaders in the exchange of information, Facebook has the ability to combat the alarming level of ignorance about the Armenian Genocide. The stakes could not be higher or more existential than they are right now, as the grandchildren of the architects of the Twentieth Century’s first genocide are in the process of attempting to finish the job on the grandchildren, and great grandchildren of the survivors of the Twentieth Century’s first genocide. By banning denial of the Holocaust, Facebook identified that it is not merely a platform that allow users carte blanche to freely express all ideas – however controversial. Rather, Facebook has elected, on a moral basis, to ban such content which debases and disregards the dignity of human life. As such, it should apply these same moral principles to ban denial of the Armenian Genocide, which was no less repugnant or alarming than the Holocaust. To do otherwise would wrongly suggest that Armenian lives are worth less than those of other victims of genocide. On December 10, during a military parade taking place in the capital of Azerbaijan, the president of Turkey glorified the organizers and perpetrators of the Armenian Genocide during the times of the Ottoman Empire and the mass atrocities against Armenians committed in Baku in September 1918. In addition to the aforementioned, the speeches of both Azerbaijani and Turkish presidents were full of hatred against the Armenian people, threatening the life and health of the whole population of Armenia, contained expressions of insults and instigating hatred. (Azerbaijan breaks ceasefire with Armenia, Erdogan hails leaders of Armenian genocide and ‘Islamic Army of Caucasus’ ([jihadwatch.org](http://jihadwatch.org))) Failure to ban the denial of the Armenian Genocide would make Facebook complicit with those who are attempting to finish that genocide today.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10032

Public comment number

United States and Canada

Region

Henry

Commenter's first name

Theriault

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

## International Association of Genocide & No ars

Organization

Response on behalf of organization

-----

Short summary provided by the commenter

President Erdogan celebrate this genocide. The meme in question follows many scholars who have pointed out the contradiction at the heart of Turkish denial: “no Armenian Genocide occurred but the Armenians deserved it.” The meme is not hate nor cruel/insensitive speech. If someone experiences it that way, that is because denial of the Armenian Genocide is so normalized that pointing out their denial upsets them. It cannot be cruel or insensitive to point out that a group is being cruel and insensitive to the victims of a genocide by denying it.

Full Comment

The 1915 Armenian Genocide is an extremely well-documented fact. Indeed, the century-long denial by the Turkish government and its Western academic proxies has required credible scholars the world over—including in Turkey—to amass so much evidence that it is arguably one of the most well-proven of all historical facts. The work of scholars such as Taner Akcam, Vahakn Dadrian, and Raymond Kevorkian is absolutely compelling for any objective person. The US Library of Congress has created a subject heading “Armenian Genocide,” while former US Ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power, included a lengthy account of the Armenian Genocide in her Pulitzer Prize-winning 2002 book, “A Problem from Hell”: America and the Age of Genocide. Yet, the Turkish government spends millions of dollars on public relations firms, lobbyists, and more as well as committing countless diplomatic personnel to the pursuit of denial. It is not uncommon for a Turkish ambassador or consul to attempt to interfere with curricular decisions by US state legislatures. Scholars have analyzed this denial campaign extensively, exposing its manipulation of information, fallacious “reasoning,” and psychological motivations. At the same time, during the 2020 war over Nagorno-Karabakh, both Turkish and Azeri leaders and citizens engaged in genocidal rhetoric against Armenians. For instance, Turkish President Tayyip Recep Erdogan took to referring to Armenians as “leftovers of the sword”



([https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=114278801987522&story\\_fbid=2936483956433645](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=114278801987522&story_fbid=2936483956433645)), thereby stating that (1) Armenians were subjected to mass violence and (2) Armenians exist now because the extermination campaign was not completed. The pejorative nature of the term makes it clear that Erdogan and his supporters believe that contemporary Armenians' right to existence is questionable. The use of the "two buttons" meme with the Turkish flag and the options of denying the Armenian Genocide and justifying it (which is an admission it happened) is not a false or denigrating characterization of Turkey or Turkish people, but on the contrary presents an accurate account of the contradiction analyzed by many scholars at the heart of Turkish denial: "no Armenian Genocide occurred but the Armenians deserved it." There is no basis for considering this to be hate speech or cruel and insensitive speech, as it correctly points out an ongoing effort by the government of Turkey and many Turkish people to deny a historical fact while celebrating their ancestors' mass killing of Armenians. That a Turkish person might be upset at seeing the image is not due to its being hate speech, but rather that person being so used to the normalization of genocide-denying speech that any challenge to it is experienced as a psychological shock. This is similar, for instance, to a blatantly racist white person in the US becoming upset when a black person says that she should be treated as equal to the white person: the white person is so used to a sense of racist superiority to blacks that he cannot accept any challenge to his racism and even feels victimized by it. Additionally, it cannot be cruel or insensitive to point out when a government and many of its citizens are in fact acting in a cruel and insensitive manner toward a vulnerable group against whom their ancestors committed genocide. As renowned scholar of genocide denial Israel Charny has explained, genocide denial itself is a mocking of the victims of a genocide by the deniers. It is no wonder a Turkish person might feel attacked by mere mention of the Armenian Genocide. The Turkish penal code actually includes a law, Article 301, that outlaws public reference to the Armenian Genocide as an attack on "Turkishness." It has used this law, which Amnesty International condemns (see <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/003/2006/en/>), to prosecute such notables as Nobel Prize winner Orhan Pamuk. Thus, the Turkish government itself has falsely defined any reference to a specific historical fact as (1) an attack on Turkish identity and (2) something that should be punished. Moreover, many Turkish people accept the truth of the Armenian Genocide. Some, such as Akcam, have been persecuted for their brave stances, while one Turkish citizen of Armenian descent, Hrant Dink, was publicly assassinated in Turkey in 2007 for daring to publish articles in Turkey on the Armenian Genocide. His direct killer stated that he had every right to kill Dink because Dink had "insulted Turkishness" by calling attention to the Armenian Genocide. What is striking about Facebook's removal of the meme in question is that Facebook allows rampant denial of the Armenian Genocide, either directly or through individuals and organizations that promote events and books that deny the Armenian Genocide (see, for example, notorious Armenian Genocide denier Justin McCarthy's denial on Facebook, at <https://m.facebook.com/profjustinmccarthy/photos/a.10155754171693771/10157997334598771/?type=3&source=48&tn=EH-R>, as well as the denialist Turkish Coalition of America's page

at <https://www.facebook.com/TurkishCoalitionofAmerica/>. This issue has been raised by Joel Swanson in “Facebook has banned Holocaust denial. But what about other genocides?” (<https://forward.com/opinion/456525/facebook-has-banned-holocaust-denial-but-what-about-other-genocides/>). As pointed out above, each of these pages is a violation of the Facebook Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard. As Charny points out, genocide denial is not only a mocking of the victims of a genocide but also a celebration of that genocide. It is difficult to see what could be more cruel and insensitive. Furthermore, as I have argued in “Denial and Free Speech” (<https://www.routledge.com/Looking-Backward-Moving-Forward-Confronting-the-Armenian-Genocide/Hovannisian/p/book/9780765805195>), genocide denial is a form of hate. Thus, these websites also violate the Facebook Hate Speech Community Standard.

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10034

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

Freedom must include the ability to call out tyrants, murderers and genocide. Otherwise we are not free.

Full Comment

This is one of the best examples of the use of this meme I've ever seen. To call out a genocide. We know the genocide happened even though Turkey still denies it. Up to 2 million Armenians were butchered in a genocide that taught the world that killing millions, in the words of Stalin, is just a statistic. It was a nightmare and still is for the people of Armenia who suffered another attack just months ago, once more encouraged by Turkey. Once more, Armenians were killed, their homes and churches destroyed. Yet Facebook is so super sensitive that users can't even mock the arguments? Imagine if instead of the Armenian genocide, it had been about the Holocaust or the genocide of Uyghur Muslims. Facebook now bans Holocaust denial. Why not the denial of the Armenian genocide? If not, then is your choice to ban all political speech? Would you ban criticism of the Middle Passage or slavery? Because it seems mean? 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. Facebook includes in its rules an exemption not much unlike this principle: 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." If users can't criticize genocide, then what can we talk about? Recipes? Cats? The Media Research Center stands in support of a free speech stance. 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 enable the rightful blocking of content that threatens violence or spews obscenity, without trampling on free speech liberties that have long made the United States a beacon for freedom. Facebook suggests in its Community Standards that the platform “recognize[s] how important it is for Facebook to be a place where people feel empowered to communicate,” but such communication cannot be had if free speech is not allowed on the platform. The Board should, as Facebook’s Community Standards provide, “allow discussion, which often includes critical commentary.” Surely, that must include the ability to call out genocide.

[Link to Attachment](#)

**No Attachment**

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10035

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

The Armenian Genocide is a recognized fact by the governments of 32 countries, including the United States Senate and House of Representatives. As the Senate stated, it is the policy of the United States “to reject efforts to enlist, engage, or otherwise associate the United States Government with denial of the Armenian Genocide or any other genocide.” Yet on Facebook, the Armenian genocide never happened. Armenian Genocide denial is part of a widespread anti-Armenian hate speech problem on social media (e.g., Facebook allows multiple Armenian Genocide denial groups to exist). In large part, proliferation of Armenian Genocide denial is the result of concerted efforts by the government of Turkey. Facebook must ban Armenian Genocide denial.

Full Comment

The Armenian Genocide is a recognized fact by the governments of 32 countries, including the United States Senate and House of Representatives. [1] As the Senate stated, it is the policy of the United States “to reject efforts to enlist, engage, or otherwise associate the United States Government with denial of the Armenian Genocide or any other genocide.” Yet on Facebook, the Armenian genocide never happened. Armenian Genocide denial is part of a widespread anti-Armenian hate speech problem on social media. [2] As one example, Facebook allows multiple Armenian Genocide denial groups to exist, despite being reported multiple times.[3] In large part, proliferation of Armenian Genocide denial is the result of concerted efforts by the Turkish government. [4] The Armenian Bar Association has called on Facebook to fix its hate speech problem and ban Armenian Genocide denial, just like Facebook banned Holocaust denial. [5] Perhaps as a coping mechanism against Armenian Genocide denial and anti-Armenian hate speech, and as a way to showcase the denial [6], some users have created and shared memes mocking

Armenian Genocide deniers [7]. Such memes can be problematic because it can be difficult to discern whether the user's intent is to mock Genocide deniers or whether the user's intent is to mock the Armenian Genocide. To the educated world, the absurdity of statements that "the Armenian genocide is a lie" and "Armenians are terrorists that deserved it" is self-evident, similar to the absurdity of statements that "the Holocaust is a lie" and "Jews are terrorists that deserved it." Yet, Turkey propagates such denial statements against Armenians in their efforts to erase the Armenian Genocide. In fact, the statements match one of the narratives propagated by Genocide deniers on the Internet, that Armenians are terrorists and the "Genocide lie" is part of that terrorism [8]. Some users may not be able to discern whether a meme is a satirical way of showcasing Genocide denial or whether it is mocking the Armenian Genocide. First, because the Turkish government tries to pass these absurd statements as facts, some people unknowingly (or knowingly in many cases) accept these statements as facts at an alarming level of ignorance about the Armenian Genocide (ignorance, according to Mark Zuckerberg is enough reason to ban Holocaust denial on Facebook [9]). Second, inexperienced social media users that are unaware of meme trends may take the statements at face value, recognizing the typical Genocide denial narrative, and see the statements as offensive against Armenians. Finally, Genocide deniers can also use such memes to promote Genocide denial, counting on the ignorance of the average user. As a result, there is a fine line between mocking the deniers and mocking the Armenian Genocide, and it is not clear which side is taken by the poster at issue. Facebook algorithms favor content that emotionally engages users; posts that are engaged with, are curated by Facebook for other Facebook users. Because there is a clear bias towards extreme speech on Facebook, hateful speech against Armenians spreads like wildfire. Thus, the Facebook platform is ripe to be exploited and manipulated by bad actors such as the government of Turkey, and its extremists' groups. Indeed, Turkey has a documented history of bot usage and social media manipulation, that game the algorithms to spread their hate-speech and misinformation. [10] Denial and distortion of history, such as denying the Armenian Genocide, is an important tool in the arsenal of hate speech. Hate speech encourages the dehumanization of individuals and groups and is used to justify discrimination and other acts of violence. For example, Armenian Genocide denial allows for history to repeat itself, as a recent example by Azerbaijan, supported by Turkey, attacking indigenous Armenian lands during the pandemic, emboldened with hateful rhetoric against Armenians. [11] Clearly, Facebook must wholesale ban Armenian Genocide denial, like it banned Holocaust denial, and acknowledge what 32 countries, including the United States Senate and House of Representatives has recognized and condemned, the killing of an estimated 1,500,000 Armenians by the Ottoman Empire from 1915 to 1923. Denying the Armenian Genocide belittles the suffering of the victims and survivors of the atrocities perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire. The Armenian people have lost everything, our families were killed, we were driven out of our native lands, and now our history is being erased and rewritten and we are being harassed with impunity on social media by Genocide deniers.

[1] <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-resolution/150/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22armenian%22%5D%7D&r=2>

<https://www.businessinsider.com/facebook-twitter-hate-speech-holocaust-denial-armenian-genocide-2020-12> [2] <https://www.facebook.com/Armenian-Genocide-Lie-1481787025381317/> <https://www.facebook.com/Ermeni-Soyk%C4%B1r%C4%B1m%C4%B1-Yalan%C4%B1-Armenian-Genocide-Lie--179071972200237/https://www.facebook.com/stoparmenianfascism/> [4] <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19448953.2016.1176397> [5] <https://www.facebook.com/ArmenianBarAssociation/posts/3834302889915641> [6] <https://www.deviantart.com/ironpiedmont1996/art/Armenian-Genocide-contradiction-769445322> [7] [https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryMemes/comments/9a0gsk/when\\_you\\_do\\_a\\_post\\_about\\_the\\_armenian\\_genocide/https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryMemes/comments/ba4e6l/it\\_didnt\\_happen\\_but\\_they\\_deserved\\_it/https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryMemes/comments/elqxtf/the\\_armenian\\_genocide\\_happened\\_and\\_it\\_sucked/](https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryMemes/comments/9a0gsk/when_you_do_a_post_about_the_armenian_genocide/https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryMemes/comments/ba4e6l/it_didnt_happen_but_they_deserved_it/https://www.reddit.com/r/HistoryMemes/comments/elqxtf/the_armenian_genocide_happened_and_it_sucked/) [8] [https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=3233644123528923&id=1481787025381317](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3233644123528923&id=1481787025381317) [9] <https://time.com/5899201/facebook-holocaust-denial/> [10] [https://www.iftf.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/images/DigIntel/IFTF\\_State\\_sponsored\\_trolling\\_report.pdf](https://www.iftf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/images/DigIntel/IFTF_State_sponsored_trolling_report.pdf) [11] <https://www.ombuds.am/images/files/2032f021fe81176414a649d588ad0e86.pdf>

Link to Attachment

No Attachment

2021-005-FB-UA

Case number

PC-10039

Public comment number

Europe

Region

Thomas

Commenter's first name

de Waal

Commenter's last name

English

Commenter's preferred language

Thomas de Waal

Organization

No

Response on behalf of organization

----

Short summary provided by the commenter

I believe that Facebook was correct to remove the post. It was deeply hurtful and disrespectful to the memory of the more than one million Ottoman Armenians who perished in what is generally regarded as the worst atrocity of the First World War. The post echoes a "denialist" discourse which is now rejected by scholars, and by many in Turkey itself.

Full Comment

I have been invited to comment on the recent Facebook post on the “two buttons” and the Armenian Genocide. I would like to endorse the view that the post was a form of hate speech that mocked victims of mass violence. It was deeply offensive to the memory of more than one million Armenian civilians who lost their lives in the First World War as victims of Ottoman deportations and massacres, and to their descendants. I am a Senior Fellow with the think-tank Carnegie Europe and the author of a book entitled *Great Catastrophe* (Oxford University Press, 2015) on the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide and Armenian-Turkish relations. My book is not a history of the period 1915-16 itself, but draws on the work of distinguished historians such as Taner Akcam, Donald Bloxham, Raymond Kevorkian and Ronald Suny. I tell the story of how at the time, during and after World War I itself, the mass murder and deportation of the Ottoman Armenians was commonly accepted to be the worst mass atrocity of that conflict. There was resistance and violence from the Armenian side but it was far outweighed by the suffering endured by Armenian civilians. However, the subject was enveloped in silence with the scattering of surviving Armenians across the world and the birth of the Republic of Turkey and the USSR. A Turkish “denialist” narrative then developed in the 1970s, in parallel with episodes of Armenian terrorism directed at Turkish diplomats. The Facebook post, calling all Armenians “terrorists” and the Armenian Genocide a “lie” is in line with this offensive denialist discourse, which is rejected by all decent scholars around the world and many in Turkey itself. The term “genocide,” devised



by Raphael Lemkin in 1944, is politically toxic and ambiguously defined. That is a theme of my book but is not relevant here. Most scholars also agree that the Armenian case fits Lemkin's term "genocide," despite legal and terminological issues. I certainly use the term "Armenian Genocide" and so do most international scholars and historians. I would like to highlight the fact that many Turks do not use the word "genocide" but express sincere regret and sympathy for the horrific loss of Armenian lives. The "I apologize" campaign launched by Turkish intellectuals expressed the sentiment, with thousands signing a statement that said: " My conscience does not accept the insensitivity showed to and the denial of the Great Catastrophe that the Ottoman Armenians were subjected to in 1915. I reject this injustice and for my share, I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers and sisters. I apologize to them." In 1915 even former Turkish prime minister and foreign minister Ahmet Davutoglu expressed regret and sympathy. The language was not as strong as Armenians would have liked but there was certainly no "blaming the victim" or denying the events themselves, as the Facebook post did. In short, the post is not only offensive to Armenians and their descendants but to many citizens of Turkey who seek reconciliation with Armenians. I support Facebook's decision to remove this post. Thomas de Waal, Senior Fellow Carnegie Europe March 16, 2021 (I am writing this comment in my personal capacity)

[Link to Attachment](#)

**No Attachment**