

Facebook's decision on this content should be overturned and the content reinstated. Like the content reinstated in [Case 2020-005-FB-UA](#), this was not "praise and support." Like the content reinstated in [Case 2021-003-FB-UA](#), this post was related to the human rights of a minority group that has experienced persecution. Facebook's principle of "voice" commits to allowing discussions about "issues that matter even if some may disagree or find them objectionable." In the context of the historical and current oppression faced by the Kurdish people and the controversy surrounding the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), the post in this case is exactly the kind of content that principle should protect.

Based on the description of this content, it was clearly meant to inspire discussion. Praise or support for Öcalan or the PKK is not a necessary prerequisite to arguing about conditions of his imprisonment, and doesn't appear to have been part of this post. Academic journals and blogs have hosted content about the PKK and Öcalan for years. Yet Instagram, a place where impacted communities including members of the Kurdish diaspora can discuss these issues, shut that conversation down. Users shouldn't have to leave Instagram or Facebook to talk about politics.

One specific contextual issue looms large, for this case, and the broader Dangerous Organizations policy; the US State Department "Foreign Terrorist Organization" designation (and other national designations) of the PKK as a terrorist organization and how that relates to Facebook's internal designations and enforcement. It should be noted that such lists are highly political. For example, they largely exclude far-right or white supremacist organizations. Like other groups included on such lists, PKK's designation is not noncontroversial; national security and human rights experts in the United States have argued that the [PKK should be delisted](#), and the highest court in Belgium recently upheld a lower court ruling that [the PKK is not a terrorist organization](#). The designation has also been discussed widely in academic journals, from a variety of perspectives.

The Board should look at how overzealous attempts to eradicate all content related to terrorism, in concert with the political nature of terrorist designation lists, silence political speech. The risk is especially high given, as touted by Facebook, the increasing use of automation to moderate this content. That's why Facebook's lack of ability or willingness to tell the Board if automation was involved in this case is particularly concerning. Either Facebook is simply refusing to share important details, or Facebook's use of automation is so pervasive that it doesn't know the answer. Either option is unacceptable.

Whether by human or automated means, Facebook is rapidly deleting counter speech against terrorist organizations and [human rights documentation](#). Mnemonic has [researched](#) and [written](#) about the [astounding rate](#) at which this content is removed. We saw this most recently when the US temporarily designated the Houthis as a terrorist organization. Removals of human rights documentation from Yemen spiked. Everywhere we've seen this issue play out, it's not just content depicting human rights abuses in progress, and it's certainly not recruitment videos. It's videos from investigations into [attacks on medical facilities in Yemen](#), [chemical attacks on civilians in Syria](#), and [violence against protesters in Sudan](#).

One last important aspect of this case is that it could impact all Kurdish language users of the platform. Kurdish has several forms, and can be written in Latin or Perso-Arabic script. Both options are available on Facebook. Facebook users who speak non Latin alphabet languages have pointed to lack of language expertise on staff, bad translations of community standards, and what looks like substandard natural language processing (NLP) for non Latin languages (for example, researchers are still attempting to address the [challenges posed by Arabic](#)). As a more complex language written in multiple scripts and versions, any automated detection done on content related to the PKK is likely to have increased false positives.

The Board should again call on Facebook to make its Dangerous Organizations list public and clarify its policy. The policy should explain how Facebook refers to terrorist designation lists from the US, EU, and everywhere it operates, how it accounts for differences between countries' lists, and [how it interprets sanctions lists and prohibitions on material support](#) for terrorism. The Board should recommend that Facebook refer to specific public terrorist designation lists but not treat them as authoritative, and that Facebook should not refer to lists of groups designated as terrorist or extremist that are created by authoritarian governments. The Board should direct Facebook to clarify that discussions of banned groups that do not meet the level of praise or violate any other policies are allowed on the platform, and to facilitate this Facebook should provide examples demonstrating the difference in its Community Standards or help center. Lastly, the Board should call on Facebook to commit to updating its Dangerous Organizations list regularly, and to removing organizations when appropriate.

Enacting these changes would enable increased transparency and fair application of Facebook's rules. They would also enable Facebook to act with more clarity on groups like the Proud Boys that are not on any designation list, while facilitating political speech about designated groups. In the current climate, the need for such changes has become ever more urgent.

Finally, it has to be noted that at this point in the Board's operation, if Facebook doesn't integrate policy suggestions from the Board or fails to provide essential information about cases submitted for review by the Board, it should be taken as a sign that the company is engaging with the Board in bad faith.