

Facebook definition of terrorism helps governments silence dissent

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Others Society

 This file illustration picture taken on April 28, 2018 shows the logo of social network Facebook displayed on a screen and reflected on a tablet in Paris. (Photo by AFP)

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A UN human rights expert has warned that Facebook's definition of what constitutes “terrorism” is “overly broad” and may lead to governments suppressing legitimate opposition groups and dissenting voices.

“The use of such a sweeping definition is particularly worrying in light of a number of governments seeking to stigmatize diverse forms of dissent and opposition -- whether peaceful or violent -- as terrorism,” the UN special rapporteur on protecting human rights and countering terrorism, Fionnuala Ni Aolain, wrote in a letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Monday.

Ni Aolain said in the [letter](#) that defining all non-state groups using violence for a goal as terrorists could lead to excessive censoring and blocking of access to its platform.

“The use of overly broad and imprecise definitions as the basis for regulating access to and the use of Facebook’s platform may lead to discriminatory implementation, over-censoring and arbitrary denial of access to and use of Facebook’s services,” she said.

“The definition is further at odds with international humanitarian law as it qualifies all non-state armed groups party to a non-international armed conflict as

terrorists, even if these groups comply with international humanitarian law,” Ni Aolain noted.

The UN official also voiced concern over lack of clarity about the methods the social networking service company uses to determine if a person belongs to a particular group, and if that person has “the opportunity to meaningfully challenge such determination.”

“The absence of any independent processes of review, oversight and monitoring of Facebook’s actions is also highly problematic,” Ni Aolain said.

The UN human rights expert commended “the important role Facebook plays in offsetting terrorist activity online,” but said the social media company must not unduly interfere in the human rights of its users and should ensure there is a way to challenge wrong decisions.



PressTV-UN: Facebook had role in plight of Myanmar’s Rohingya

[UN investigators reprimand Facebook for allowing the incitement of violence against minority Muslims in Myanmar.](#)

Social media firms are already under UN scrutiny for allowing users to incite hatred and target minorities.

Former UN human rights chief Zeid Ra’ad al-Hussein said last week that Facebook had allowed its platform to be used to incite violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar, where UN experts say a military crackdown had “genocidal intent.”

On Monday, Facebook [banned](#) Myanmar military’s commander-in-chief and a number of other pages tied to the country accused of using the platform to “inflame ethnic and religious tensions.”

Myanmar’s government has been under intense pressure over the violent military crackdown on the

Muslim community, which has forced more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee to neighboring Bangladesh.