

<b>From:</b>	(b)(6)
<b>To:</b>	Holly Kilroy <(b)(6)>; enayat<(b)(6)>
<b>Subject:</b>	FW: FW: qRE: ****URGENT**** please help! Tavaana FB page blocked from posting photos, videos
<b>Date:</b>	Tue, 20 Nov 2018 16:00:16 +0000

Mahmood and Holly,

Have you seen this issue with Instagram accounts dropping in followers?

Best,

(b)(6)

**From:** Mariam Memarsadeghi <(b)(6)>  
**Sent:** Monday, November 19, 2018 3:39 PM  
**To:** Monika Bickert <(b)(6)>  
**Cc:** Katie Harbath <(b)(6)>; Simon Milner <(b)(6)>; Elliot Schrage <(b)(6)>; Akbar Atri <(b)(6)>; Tamara Wittes <(b)(6)>; Jillian C. York <(b)(6)>; <(b)(6)>; <(b)(6)>; <(b)(6)> dkaye<(b)(6)> Rebecca MacKinnon <(b)(6)> <(b)(6)>

**Subject:** Fwd: FW: qRE: \*\*\*\*URGENT\*\*\*\* please help! Tavaana FB page blocked from posting photos, videos

Dear Monika Bickert,

I am in touch again about Tavaana's Instagram account. After being thrown off the platform during the peak of protests (see below email from January), we now have a new problem: Tavaana's IGTV was getting 20K - 750K views. Suddenly, our views dropped to below 1k, and we started to lose our followers and engagement. On (sister project) TavaanaTech's Instagram, we do not have such problems.

Is this related to regime activity or Instagram algorithms? I have attached reports for both Tavaana and TavaanaTech. We would be grateful for help to understand how we are being compromised. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
 Mariam Memarsadeghi

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Mariam Memarsadeghi <(b)(6)>  
**Date:** Tue, Jan 9, 2018 at 3:13 PM  
**Subject:** Re: FW: qRE: \*\*\*\*URGENT\*\*\*\* please help! Tavaana FB page blocked from posting photos, videos

To: Monika Bickert <(b)(6)>  
 Cc: Ashraf Zeitoon <(b)(6)>, Katie Harbath <(b)(6)>, Simon Milner <(b)(6)>, Elliot Schrage <(b)(6)>, akbar <(b)(6)> <(b)(6)>, wittes.tamara <(b)(6)>, jillian <(b)(6)> <jillian <(b)(6)>, <(b)(6)> <(b)(6)>, <dkaye <(b)(6)>, Rebecca MacKinnon <(b)(6)>

Dear Monika Bickert,

We were last in touch in August 2016, after Facebook decided to ban our use of videos and photos for one month following reports by Iranian regime trolls. During the height of the ongoing Iran protests, our Instagram account was taken down for over 10 hours. Instagram has recognized that this was a mistake on its part but the Iranian people lost valuable time as Iranian regime outlets continued to use your platform freely.

We would like you to be aware that our Instagram pages -- Tavaana and TavaanaTech -- are and will be reported by Iranian regime trolls with the hope that you will debilitate us, as you have already done several times on Facebook and now on Instagram, again, while allowing regime officials, media, etc to operate freely, with verified accounts.

We ask that you **please verify our accounts** and act with the awareness that our work -- funded with US taxpayer dollars to promote democracy and human rights in Iran -- is under threat on your platforms.

Sincerely,  
 Mariam Memarsadeghi

On Wed, Aug 10, 2016 at 2:19 PM, Mariam Memarsadeghi

<(b)(6)> wrote:

Thank you, Rebecca. We deeply appreciate all you are doing to help make platforms like Facebook fair and open, free of repression. It may help RDR to have this summary:

We were given a warning by Facebook that a post with a picture of a Lebanese skier/model in a bikini was against their terms of use. We wrote [this letter](#) to Mark Zuckerberg in the WSJ as a response. The irony was not lost on us. We posted about the woman because of a region-wide controversy over her choice of dress. Being a civil society/civic education initiative for Iran, we are always asking questions of our audience about their thoughts on civil and political liberties, social norms, personal freedoms, social justice, etc. Our community was surprised that the repressive arms of the Iranian regime stretch this far to limit free discourse and understanding about women's choice of dress.

After our letter, Ashraf Zeitoun called us and said Facebook had done nothing wrong, but he also promised that it would not happen again. Surprised at the contradiction of the answer and worried that it would in fact happen again, I pressed Ashraf to say why Facebook would not give us a similar warning again if Facebook felt it was justified.

IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR TO US HOW A WOMAN IN A BIKINI VIOLATES FACEBOOK'S TERMS OF USE.

We were given a warning by Facebook that a post with a video taken by an eye witness with her mobile phone of a peaceful protest in Tehran that was violently repressed by state forces violated their terms of use. Because of this post, we were banned from posting videos and photos for one week.

IT IS STILL NOT CLEAR TO US HOW A VIDEO TAKEN BY AN ACTIVIST AND SENT TO US TO BE CIRCULATED AS WIDELY AS POSSIBLE VIOLATES FACEBOOK'S TERMS OF USE.

After the week long ban, we went back on and posted our own production -- a satirical comedy show (featuring a popular comedian/political commentator who himself is subject to all manner of cyber threats from the regime) -- about leading personalities of the Iranian government and their violations of human rights, corruption and abuse of power. In less than two or three hours, we were again given a warning by Facebook. This time Ashraf said our video production included copyrighted music.

Now we are banned for one month from posting videos and photos, BUT WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT TERMS OF USE FACEBOOK BELIEVES WE VIOLATED THIS TIME OR WHAT POST WAS DEEMED A VIOLATION. Rather than grow more transparent and accountable, Facebook is not even providing "evidence" of the violation.

We have often been the Persian language's top performing page on Facebook. Our audience relies on us for highly censored news and educational resources for democracy and human rights. The Iranian regime pursues all manner of nefarious actions across all our virtual presence with a clear aim to compromise and destroy Tavaana. From DDOS attacks (which Google protects us from) to phishing, social engineering, malware and more, the Iranian regime does not relent. But we have effective solutions to all these threats and have safely and continuously grown our activities and reach.

With Facebook's ban, however, this positive trajectory in our impact has been greatly damaged. The American people's tax payer dollars have gone toward creating a highly engaged, popular Facebook page devoted to the struggle for freedom in Iran. An American company should help protect such an initiative, not become a tool in the hands of one of the world's most repressive regimes.

Finally, let me say that we know we make mistakes. But we are a nonprofit, educational institution trying extremely hard to abide by Facebook's terms of use. We have instituted training for our admins to make sure that Facebook's rules are honored. **But we firmly**

**believe that the problem with our page is not the violation of pornography or copyright rules. The problem with our page is that it is highly influential to the struggle for freedom, and the Iranian regime wants to crush it.**

We have no doubt that manipulation of Facebook's reporting protocols has become a "best practice" for the Iranian Cyber Army, one that the Russian, Chinese, Syrian and other repressive regimes are also employing.

Thank you again.

On Sat, Aug 6, 2016 at 3:09 PM, Rebecca MacKinnon <(b)(6)> wrote:

Sorry I'm just catching up on this thread. Since Ranking Digital Rights was mentioned, I will simply take the opportunity to point out that Facebook received a very low score on our remedy indicator, and received zero points on the indicators seeking greater transparency about private requests and terms of service enforcement. We continue to talk to Facebook about the company's performance on these particular indicators of good practice, as well as other areas related to freedom of expression and privacy on which we will continue to benchmark the company's progress. We are encouraged by a number of private conversations and public statements and steps in relation to some areas of good practice that the company has taken over the past year. However I must regret to say that I have not yet seen evidence of meaningful progress on policies and practices related to the three indicators cited above. Our upcoming research cycle will examine all changes that the company has made since last year in a more systematic manner. We should be able to identify what - if any - improvements have been made on indicators relevant to the concerns discussed in this thread.

Best regards,  
Rebecca

On Thu, Aug 4, 2016 at 2:30 PM, Monika Bickert <(b)(6)> wrote:

Hello Miriam,

My name is Monika Bickert and I am the Head of Global Policy Management at Facebook. Ashraf forwarded your email to me. The matter you've raised has been escalated and reviewed by senior officials at Facebook, and I wanted to provide you an update and also express our willingness to speak further with you.

Our review determined that this is not a case of abuse of FB reporting or "automatic suspension protocols," nor the result of any targeting by nefarious actors. We work hard to make sure that our policies and procedures are responsive to the needs of our community, and are not gamed by malicious actors, including spammers, hackers, or those who seek to silence political dissent. We also constantly monitor for signs that users are being targeted by an attacker suspected of working on behalf of a nation-state, and we notify users when we believe they are suffering such attacks.

Our review concluded that this Page was temporarily blocked from posting because of repeated violations of intellectual property rights, which were properly reported by IP rights holders, and communicated to the Page admins through the Support Inbox. Our teams communicated to the Page admins that repeated violations of policy will result in the suspension of a page, and these multiple warnings were apparently ignored. My own review determined that this is still the appropriate outcome.

Going forward, you may wish to ensure that you only upload videos and other content that you own or have the right to upload. Keep in mind that audio content may also be subject to IP protection. If you see content on other Facebook Pages that you would like to include on your page, you may want to use the "Share" feature on those pages in order to share that content on your Page, rather than uploading it separately.

This is an unfortunate situation, given the educational goals of your organization. However, Facebook has legal obligations to IP holders, and your good faith or personal access to Facebook leadership cannot justify repeated violations of IP laws and Facebook policies.

I'm sorry that the outcome here is not what you'd like, and I recognize that this must be frustrating. We welcome any feedback on how to make our policies more transparent to people, as well as any thoughts on Page admins should be notified when they violate these standards.

Facebook is deeply committed to protecting the free expression and privacy rights of our users and to engaging productively with civil society, including through our engagement with the Ranking Digital Rights team and our membership and active participation in the Global Network Initiative (GNI). We have close relationships with many individuals and organizations active in the human rights community around the world, and we regularly consult with them on products, policies, procedures, and specific cases (like this one). We also partner with civil society organizations on a number of important issues of shared interest, including efforts to promote freedom of expression, protect privacy, spread digital connectivity, strengthen the civil society capacity to operate online, and encourage adoption of security best practices.

We hope that we can continue to build out a constructive relationship with you as well. My team and I are available to speak with you at your convenience to answer any additional questions.

Sincerely,  
Monika

**From:** Mariam Memarsadeghi <(b)(6)>  
**Date:** April 21, 2016 at 12:30:26 PM GMT-3  
**To:** Ashraf Zeitoun <(b)(6)>  
**Cc:** Katie Harbath <(b)(6)>, Akbar Atri <(b)(6)>, Simon Milner <(b)(6)>, <elliott.(b)(6)>, Rebecca MacKinnon <(b)(6)>, "Jillian C. York" <(b)(6)>, "Tamara Wittes" <(b)(6)>  
**Subject:** Re: qRE: \*\*\*\*URGENT\*\*\*\* please help! Tavaana FB page blocked from posting photos, videos

Dear Ashraf,

With all due respect to your desire to abide by copyright laws, the video you sent us has nothing to do with any media organization. It is filmed by a protestor on the streets of Tehran with the hope that the likes of Tavaana will disseminate broadly to show the repression of the Iranian regime. This type of video is precisely what the Iranian regime does not want the Iranian people to see.

We are aware of FB policies and try our best to always be compliant. I am sure we have made mistakes, but the video you have sent us does not violate any entity's copyright protections.

At precisely a time of heightened civic mobilization and the Tavaana FB page's effectiveness in being the voice of the people, FB has become a tool in the hands of oppressors rather than those using it with the hope of freedom. Facebook has debilitated us.

You say that those reporting our page are not from a government agency or government official, but you all don't need us to tell you how repressive regimes hide behind agents, trolls, bots, etc.

Our website used to be subject to several DDOS attacks daily. Attacks were scattered throughout the world, from China to Dubai to Russia. Google gave us refuge under their ProjectShield, and since then, we have had near 100% up time. This is in addition to providing us with \$40,000/month in free advertising. With our Facebook page, the exact opposite is happening: the Iranian regime is using all manner of means to mask their nefarious actions, but rather than giving us refuge, Facebook has become their tool, censoring us while charging us for advertising and putting us, a nonprofit entity, under the same algorithms that apply to the world's largest banks or clothing retailers.

**Again, the video you sent us is from a protestor on the streets of Tehran.**

We are a human rights/civic education organization with strong outreach and communication with Iranian civil society. We routinely post videos from citizens on the ground. Given you have deemed this video to be in violation of copyright, we are extremely concerned about how you will treat future reports from the Iranian regime's trolls.

This is a highly sensitive time in Iran, with the regime cracking down on protestors. While the mainstream media is not paying much attention, ordinary people via social media are making a difference. It's heartbreaking to think a platform as vital as Facebook is silencing them rather than empowering them.

Sincerely,  
Mariam Memarsadeghi

Rebecca MacKinnon  
Director, [Ranking Digital Rights @ New America](#)  
Author, [Consent of the Networked](#)  
Co-founder, [Global Voices](#)  
Twitter: [@rmack](#)  
Office: (b)(6)

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**Mariam Memarsadeghi**

Co-Founder/Co-Director, [E-Collaborative for Civic Education](#)

To learn about [Tavaana E-Learning Institute for Iranian Civil Society](#), view our animated video: [Why Open Education Matters](#)

Also check out our [Tolerance Project](#) ([English](#) / [Arabic](#) / [Persian](#))

**Official**

**UNCLASSIFIED**

<b>Sender:</b>	(b)(6)
<b>Recipient:</b>	Holly Kilroy <(h)(6)> enayat(h)(6)