

**Question for written answer E-000789/2021
to the Commission
Rule 138
Virginie Joron (ID)**

Subject: Arbitrary censorship carried out by Facebook

On 28 January 2021, Facebook's Oversight Board annulled previous decisions to remove content which, in the view of Facebook, contained hate speech or disinformation¹. In one case, Facebook had arbitrarily removed a message in France criticising officials for not using hydroxychloroquine to treat a COVID-19 patient².

Another case concerned a screenshot of two tweets by Mahathir Mohamad in which the former Malaysian Prime Minister stated that Muslims had the right to be angry and to kill millions of French people for massacres committed in the past³. The case was then abandoned as the Board apparently no longer had access to it and was therefore unable to examine it⁴. Therefore the Board did not rule on the deletion of this message.

The above underlines the precarious situation whereby freedom of expression in France and in Europe is subordinate to Facebook or even to a foreign supervisory board – set up and paid by Facebook itself – rather than to the national courts.

1. Does the Commission therefore agree that arbitrary censorship carried out by social media platforms such as Facebook is unacceptable?
2. How will the Commission help to ensure that the European Union itself never promotes censorship?

¹ <https://www.politico.eu/article/facebooks-supreme-court-overturns-content-decisions-oversight-board/>

² <https://www.rtl.fr/actu/sciences-tech/facebook-somme-d-annuler-la-suppression-d-une-video-en-faveur-de-l-hydroxychloroquine-7800962179>

³ Original quote in English: 'Muslims have a right to be angry and kill millions of French people for the massacres of the past'. Case Report 2020-001-FB-UA; <https://oversightboard.com/decision/FB-KBHZS8BL/>

⁴ Original quote in English: 'The case 2020-001-FB-UA became unavailable for review by the Board as a result of user action.' Case Report 2020-001-FB-UA; <https://oversightboard.com/decision/FB-KBHZS8BL/>