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Corruption of law enforcement in Indonesia

A user appealed Meta's decision to remove a Facebook post that included a video discussing corruption among police officers in Indonesia. The case highlights an inconsistency in how Meta applies its Violence and Incitement policy to political metaphorical statements, which could be a significant deterrent to open online expression about governments. After the Board brought the appeal to Meta's attention, the company reversed its earlier decision and restored the post.

Policies and topics

 Governments

 Violence and incitement

Region and countries

 Asia Pacific and Oceania

 Indonesia

Platform

 Facebook

This is a summary decision. Summary decisions examine cases where Meta reversed its original decision on a piece of content after the Board brought it to the company's attention. These decisions include information about Meta's acknowledged errors. They are approved by a Board Member panel, not the full Board. They do not consider public comments and do not have precedential value for the Board. Summary decisions provide transparency on Meta's corrections and highlight areas of potential improvement in its policy enforcement.

Case summary

A user appealed Meta's decision to remove a Facebook post that included a video discussing corruption among police officers in Indonesia. The case highlights an inconsistency in how Meta applies its Violence and Incitement policy to political metaphorical statements, which could be a significant deterrent to open online expression about governments. After the Board brought the appeal to Meta's attention, the company reversed its earlier decision and restored the post.

Case description and background

In April 2023, a Facebook user posted a video in which they gave a monologue in Bahasa Indonesia denouncing the corrupt practices of Indonesia's National Police. The user alleged that the Chief of the National Police had said, "If I can't clean my tail, I'll cut off its head." The user remarked that those dirty tails that could not be cleaned had actually become the heads, because the corrupt practices of subordinate law enforcement officers were guarded and maintained by the leaders of the police force. The user also named some specific individuals involved in their case who had since been promoted. Under the video, there was caption that read, "How could a dirty broom clean a dirty floor?"

The Board understands the analogy by the Chief of the National Police to mean that he was taking a hard line towards corruption and implying that if he could not eradicate corruption among lower-level officers, he would take action against higher-level ones. The Board takes the user's remarks that "dirty tails became heads" as irony, suggesting that corrupt officers from the lower levels rose through the ranks to become

corrupt officials. Together with the caption that referred to the "dirty broom", the Board considers that this was why the user believed corruption was endemic in Indonesia.

Meta originally removed the post from Facebook, citing its Violence and Incitement policy, under which the company removes content containing "threats that could lead to death (and other forms of high-severity violence)... targeting people".

After the Board brought this case to Meta's attention, the company determined that its removal was incorrect and restored the content to the platform. The company told the Board that, instead of targeting a particular person or group of people, the user was drawing attention to the pervasive nature of corruption and the relationship between police leaders and subordinates. The company therefore concluded that there was no target for violence, as is required to violate the Violence and Incitement policy.

Board authority and scope

The Board has authority to review Meta's decision following an appeal from the user whose content was removed (Charter Article 2, Section 1; Bylaws Article 3, Section 1).

Where Meta acknowledges that it made an error and reverses its decision in a case under consideration for Board review, the Board may select that case for a summary decision (Bylaws Article 2, Section 2.1.3). The Board reviews the original decision to increase understanding of the content moderation process, to reduce errors and increase fairness for people who use Facebook and Instagram.

Case significance

This case highlights an inconsistency in how Meta applies its Violence and Incitement policy to political metaphorical statements. The inconsistency could be a significant deterrent to criticism of governments. The case underlines the importance of designing context-sensitive moderation systems with awareness of irony, satire or rhetorical discourse, especially to protect political speech. That is why, in its case decisions, the Board has urged Meta to put in place proper procedures for evaluating content in its relevant context ([Two Buttons meme](#), recommendation no. 3). Meta has committed to implement this recommendation. Its complete implementation, in this case for evaluating content in Bahasa Indonesia, may help to decrease the error rate of content moderation when users are discussing how governments exercise their power, where Meta's value of "Voice" is especially important.

Decision

The Board overturns Meta's original decision to remove the content. The Board acknowledges Meta's correction of its initial error once the Board brought the case to the company's attention.