

August 15, 2023

Mark Zuckerberg  
Facebook Oversight Board  
Hacker Way, Menlo Park, Ca

Dear Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook Oversight Board,

The Global Alliance Against Digital Hate & Extremism steering committee and other global civil society organizations write now to urge Meta and the Oversight Board to urgently address the issue of dangerous Hindu extremist organizations who are spreading dangerous genocidal hate speech on the platform.

**In particular, we demand the immediate removal of all pages/groups/accounts and affiliates of Bajrang Dal on all Meta products including Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp as they are currently inciting violence and mass atrocity against vulnerable Indian caste and religious minorities.**

To be clear: if they are not removed, they will continue to be a dire threat to the safety of millions of Facebook users in India.

The Bajrang Dal clearly fits the criteria of Meta's Dangerous Organization and Individuals (DOI) Policy and we demand that Meta not shirk from its responsibilities to implement its own policies. Anything less than action here is a clear demonstration of a failure of duty of care to millions of Indian users and will be yet another example of Meta's complicity with the ongoing genocide in India.

The Global Alliance Against Digital Hate and Extremism is an international movement supported by more than 70 organizations around the globe mobilizing collective action for a safe, fair and just online experience for humans everywhere. The evidence is clear: harmful behaviour permitted and exacerbated by social media companies – the spread of disinformation, hate speech, incitement to violence, and extremist propaganda online – leads to offline violence, including genocide, and threatens human rights and democracies. Many of our members are trusted partners and have worked globally inside and outside Meta to build accountability on the issues of extremism and have been deeply distressed by Meta's inconsistent positions related to India. We are deeply concerned that Meta is not enforcing its policies related to dangerous groups that are inflicting violence and terrorizing Indian communities.

The most glaring example of this is the Bajrang Dal – a youth wing of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and sister organization of Rashtriya Swayam Sevak, and the Bharatiya Janata Party. The Bajrang Dal has been noted for its militant and violent action against Indian minorities, particularly Muslim and Christian minorities and was named by the

CIA as a religious militant organization in its World Factbook.<sup>1</sup> The organization had a notable role in the incitement of the 2002 Gujarat Pogrom,<sup>2</sup> socio-religious violence across India<sup>3</sup> and in the cold-blooded murder of Graham Stuart Staines – a Christian missionary who was burnt to death along with his two children, aged 10 and 6, by a Bajrang Dal member. The Bajrang Dal continues to lead campaigns of terror against caste and religious minorities through its social media presence, including campaigns terrorizing interfaith couples through the debunked conspiracy of Muslim grooming called Love Jihad, calls for burning of churches and targeting of Indian Christians,<sup>4</sup> attacks against Dalit and Dalit historic figures like Dr. Ambedkar,<sup>5</sup> COVID-related Islamophobia under the debunked conspiracy theory of Corona Jihad, as well as direct calls to incite violence against Muslim and Christian communities through cow vigilantism and other calls for mass violence. The Bajrang Dal was even flagged by Facebook's own security teams as reported in *The Wall Street Journal* as being a dangerous group.<sup>6</sup>

The Bajrang Dal is not only carrying out acts of violence and bodily harm against already persecuted Muslim and Christian minorities in India,<sup>7</sup> it is in fact using Meta's platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp to disseminate vitriolic hate speech in order to incite more violence and rationalize the dehumanizing killings of Indian Muslims and other religious minorities. It does this through the dissemination of genocidal dangerous speech through posts, videos, images, and memes – many of which accompany direct calls for violence.

**This is why Meta and the Facebook Oversight Board must act now.** Every day that Meta allows the Bajrang Dal to continue on its platforms, Meta is complicit with the Bajrang Dal's and its associates orchestration of genocide of Indian Muslims and other Indian caste and religious minorities. Meta cannot allow such criminally negligent behavior on its platform as it is a violation of its commitment to human rights under international, Indian, EU, and US Laws. Meta's lack of action also could ensnare the company into criminal complicity with genocide.

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<sup>1</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/india/cia-names-vhp-bajrang-dal-as-religious-militant-organisations-in-world-factbook-5218249/>

<sup>2</sup>Valiani, Aafaat A. *Militant publics in India: Physical culture and violence in the making of a modern polity.* New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan. 2011; Jaffrelot, Christophe. *Religion, Caste, and Politics in India.* Primus Books.2010

<sup>3</sup>Katju, Manjari. *Vishva Hindu Parishad and Indian Politics.* Orient Blackswan. (2003); Wilkinson S. *Religious Politics and Communal Violence.* Oxford University Press.(2005).

<sup>4</sup><https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/attack-on-churches-in-karnataka-by-bajrang-dal-no-arrests-worrying-trend-2637567>

<sup>5</sup><https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/bhopal/mob-with-bajrang-dal-members-damages-ambedkar-bust-in-mp-village-assaults-dalits-police-8875408/>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-india-facebook-fears-crackdown-on-hate-groups-could-backfire-on-its-staff-11607871600>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.thequint.com/news/webqoof/how-fb-groups-pages-spread-hate-in-the-name-of-bajrang-dal%23read-more&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1691416985552894&usg=AOvVaw00kGSGg3Ytkbbafe3B0SD7>

We urge Meta to do more than pay lip service to human rights and human dignity and to immediately ban Bajrang Dal and its associates, them as a Dangerous Organization.

One glaring instance of the destructive consequences of this hate speech is the recent [communal violence in the city of Nuh](#) in Haryana, [classifyingIndia](#). This violence was instigated by [Hindutva groups](#), particularly Bajrang Dal, and exploited platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. Known criminals affiliated with Bajrang Dal, such as [Monu Manesar](#), Bitto Bajrangi, and Pinky Chaudhary who have all been accused of hate speech, hate crimes, acts of lynching, and cold-blooded murder of Indian Muslims used Facebook Live to broadcast their intent for violence showcasing weapons and calls for violence.

Despite many trusted partners and civilians reporting this content, Meta still did not act in time to prevent mass violence in Nuh. We are even more concerned that despite civil society groups raising complaints about the Bajrang Dal since 2018, Meta has still done nothing to prevent them from manipulating the platform for violence.

We are even more disturbed that since *The Wall Street Journal* reported in 2020 about Meta's fear to enforce policies related to Bajrang Dal due to the safety of its staff<sup>8</sup> that our members have heard again that Meta's staff safety is the reason why Meta isn't able to remove Bajrang Dal.

We ask then if Meta cannot even keep its own staff safe in India, how else is it failing its duty of care to all of its users? As a responsible tech company, committed to respecting human rights and human dignity in all its operations, and knowing fully well the salient impact that your platform can have on communities, it is your ethical duty to ensure that your platform is not used as a tool to incite genocidal hate and hate crimes. If Meta is not able to meet the basic threshold of safety as outlined in its own policies, let alone international obligations related to genocide and crimes against humanity, then it must consider shutting down operations. For the alternative is to be complicit in yet another market in which Meta potentially profits from genocide.

Therefore, we demand the following:

**Immediately ban Bajrang Dal:** Declare Bajrang Dal to be a DOI and ban its operation, promotion of its dangerous ideologies, and social media exposure of its members, associates, and affiliates from your platform. We have a list of all such accounts upon request.

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.wsj.com/articles/in-india-facebook-fears-crackdown-on-hate-groups-could-backfire-on-its-staff-11607871600>

**Immediately remove hate speech:** Take down [Bajrang Dal](#)'s pages, [groups](#) and profiles supporting Bajrang Dal from your platform, including all content associated with Bajrang Dal and its members, associates and affiliates that continue to incite acute violence and systematic harms against Muslim and other caste and religious minorities in India.

**Immediately release the Indian Human Rights audit:** Much of the concerns around the Bajrang Dal and the larger genocidal process in India were raised in the civil society-instigated Human Rights Audit. We need the findings of this report in order to chart the path forward from this time of extreme violence and we urge Meta to stop hiding the findings.

**Convene a co-designed dialogue and make actionable commitments to human rights with Internet freedom advocates, civil society, and human rights activists in India and its diaspora on the Genocide in India and how it impacts Meta's operations:** The time for Meta to act on genocide is now, not after it happens. We urge the company to work even more closely with experts and advocacy organizations to understand the nuances of hate speech, extremism, and their social impact, and develop strategies to counter these harmful narratives and extremist organizations effectively.

Sincerely,

The Steering Committee of the Global Alliance Against Digital Hate and Extremism

AfroLeadership  
AVAAZ  
Conscious Advertising Network  
Digital Action  
Equality Labs  
Fair Vote UK  
FOA (Fighting Online Semitism)  
Global Project Against Hate and Extremism  
Greek Helsinki Monitor  
"NEVER AGAIN" Association  
Red Dot Foundation  
The London Story

South Asia Solidarity Group  
International Council of Indian Muslims  
SADAC (South Asian Diaspora Action Collective-Montreal)  
18 Million Rising  
Free Press  
Czech Helsinki Committee  
India Civil Watch International

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