



Open letter to Facebook: Implement Your Own Community Standards

April 10th 2018, Colombo, Sri Lanka: The Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA) is issuing an open letter to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, as he prepares to testify before Congress on April 10. In this letter, CPA together with other members of civil society call on Facebook to combat social issues including gender-based violence and hate speech propagated through its platform.

While several suspects have been arrested in the wake of the violence in Digana, Ampara and surrounding areas, including, most recently, [two Army corporals](#), the role of social media platforms like Facebook in amplifying messages of violence has not been adequately examined. A delegation from Facebook met with the Government of Sri Lanka and [committed to work](#) with them to combat hate speech. However, the contents of that discussion are not in the public domain. It is not clear to what extent Facebook will be willing to work with representatives of civil society, some of whom have been flagging content on Facebook that violates its own Community Standards, for years.

Social media has long since been identified as a vector for hate speech and incitement of violence against minorities, from previous experience in Sri Lanka and from the troublingly similar case of Myanmar. Some of the posts reported include instances of hate speech, the promotion of violence against women and harassment of the LGBTIQ community. Yet many of these remain online even after being flagged.

The lack of unbiased Sinhala-language moderation is regularly cited as one of the root causes why pages regularly posting abusive content along these themes are allowed to thrive online, despite sustained reporting from concerned users.

CPA has over a number of years published reports on hate speech in Sri Lanka, including the first in South Asia looking at hate speech on Facebook, using the dangerous speech framework created by Prof. Susan Benesch. These reports have been translated into Sinhala and Tamil, and presented to Facebook by CPA researchers in several instances, with no response.

We call on Facebook to engage more actively with civil society in combating the issues raised in this letter.

Download the letter [here](#).