

Summary Decision

2023-017-FB-UA

Anti-Colonial Leader-Amílcar Cabral

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 consisted of a poem referencing the Bissau-Guinean anti-colonial leader Amílcar Cabral. 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 January 2023, a Facebook user posted content in French commemorating the passing of Amílcar Cabral on the anniversary of his assassination in 1973. Cabral is world-renowned as a Pan-African thinker who led an ultimately successfully revolutionary movement against Portuguese colonial rule in Guinea and Cape Verde. The post contained a poem, praising Cabral's contributions to the anti-colonial struggle and its impact across the African continent. The user claimed that the poem was written in 1973 and published in an African-Asian journal.

Meta originally removed the post from Facebook, citing its Dangerous Organizations and Individuals (DOI) policy, under which the company removes content that "praises", "substantively supports", or "represents" individuals and organizations they designate as dangerous.

In their appeal to the Board, the user stated that the poem is decades old and was posted to celebrate Amílcar Cabral.

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 the Bissau-Guinean leader Amílcar Cabral is not a designated individual in its DOI policy but could be mistakenly associated with another person who is designated. The post's reference to the 1973 assassination indicates who the poster intended to reference. As a result of its review in this case, Meta said it improved its enforcement practice "to avoid false positive removals of content praising the non-designated individual Amílcar Cabral."

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 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

The case highlights an error that can occur in Meta's enforcement of its DOI policy. Across four previous decisions, the Board has issued 13 specific recommendations urging Meta to clarify this policy and its enforcement ("[Mention of the Taliban in news reporting](#)," in September 2022, "[Shared Al Jazeera post](#)" in September 2021, "[Öcalan's isolation](#)" in July 2021, and "[Nazi quote](#)" January 2021). Meta has implemented or reported progress on 10 of those recommendations, while it declined to implement three. Further progress by Meta in updating its DOI policy and improving related moderation systems may help to decrease the error rate of content moderation.

In the case of Amílcar Cabral, the Board's prompting led Meta to update its enforcement practice to avoid mistaken removals of content naming him, which will apply across the platform to posts similar to this one.

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 Meta's attention.