

Violence against women testimony (2023-002-IG-UA)

Announced March 9, 2023

User appeal to restore content to Instagram

Submit public comments [here](#).

In November 2022, an Instagram user posted a video with a caption in Swedish. The video contains an audio recording, also in Swedish, of a woman describing her experience in a violent intimate relationship, including feeling unable to discuss her situation with her family. The audio does not contain specific descriptions of violence. The caption notes that the woman in the audio recording consented to it being published, and that the voice has been modified. It says that there is a culture of blaming victims of gender-based violence, and little understanding of how difficult it is for women to leave a violent partner. The caption says, “men murder, rape and abuse women mentally and physically - all the time, every day.” It also provides a helpline number and says it hopes women reading the post will realize they are not alone. The post has been viewed about 10,000 times, shared fewer than 20 times and has not been reported by anyone.

Meta removed the content from Instagram under its [Hate Speech Community Standard](#). The Hate Speech Community Standard prohibits making general claims, or “unqualified behavioural statements,” that people of a particular sex or gender are “violent criminals” or “sexual predators.” Meta's automated systems identified the content as potentially violating. After two human reviews, Meta removed the post and applied a “standard strike” to the user’s account. The user appealed, and a third human reviewer upheld the company’s decision. The content was then identified by Meta's automated High Impact False Positive Override (HIPO) system, which aims to identify content that does not violate Meta’s policies which has been wrongfully removed. This sent the content for additional review, where two more moderators found that it violated the Hate Speech policy.

The user then appealed to the Board. In their appeal, they said they frequently speak about men’s violence against women and aim to reach women who have survived violence. As a result of the Board selecting this case, Meta determined that its decision to remove the content was in error, restored the post, and reversed the strike.

The Board selected this case to explore Meta’s policies and practices in moderating content that targets people based on a protected characteristic, such as sex and

gender. This case falls within the Board’s “Gender” and “Hate speech against marginalized groups” strategic priorities.

The Board would appreciate public comments that address:

- *How Meta's Hate Speech policy may result in the removal of content containing testimonies or condemnation of gender-based violence.*
- *Insights on potential challenges and benefits of Meta’s approach to power imbalances between different “protected characteristics” in its Hate Speech policy.*
- *Insights on any challenges faced in sharing testimonies and condemnation of gender-based violence on Facebook and Instagram.*
- *Insights on the socio-political context in Sweden (and around the world), regarding violence against women, particularly intimate partner violence.*
- *How Meta’s strike system could be improved to better protect activists, human rights defenders, journalists and others against having their content mistakenly removed and penalties applied to their accounts.*

In its decisions, the Board can issue policy recommendations to Meta. While recommendations are not binding, Meta must respond to them within 60 days. As such, the Board welcomes public comments proposing recommendations that are relevant to these cases.

Public comments

If you or your organisation feel that you can contribute valuable perspectives that can help with reaching a decision on the cases announced today, you can submit your contributions using the links above. The public comment window for both cases is open for 14 days, closing at 15:00 UTC, Thursday, March 23.

The Board has also announced today that it has accepted a policy advisory opinion on Meta’s moderation of the Arabic term “shaheed. As part of this, it is accepting public comments. The public comment window for the policy advisory opinion request announced today is open until 15:00 UTC on Monday 10 April.

What's next

Over the next few weeks, Board members will be deliberating these cases. Once they have reached their final decisions, we will post them on the Oversight Board website.

To receive updates when the Board announces new cases or publishes decisions, sign up here.