Dear Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook

We are writing to you on the basis of several recent events which have created deep anxiety and concern among both Norwegian editors, Norwegian government agencies and many other Facebook users.

Two weeks ago the Norwegian author Tom Egeland posted Nick Út's picture of Kim Phuc fleeing napalm bombs during the Vietnam War in 1972. The image was removed from Egeland's Facebook account because it violated Facebook's regulations on nudity. Several others - including Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg - have experienced that Facebook has deleted the Pulitzer-winning war photo from their Facebook account. The editor of the Norwegian online newspaper Nettavisen, Gunnar Stavrum, was excluded from Facebook after sharing an editorial illustrated with the same picture. The Association of Norwegian Editors shared the same editorial on Facebook, and that post was also deleted. Editor-in-chief of Aftenposten Espen Egil Hansen expressed his concern in an open letter to you published September 9th. "Even though I am editor-in-chief of Norway’s largest newspaper, I have to realize that you are restricting my room for exercising my editorial responsibility", Hansen writes. He also questions Facebook's lack of accessibility and transparency. We share Espen Egil Hansen's concern, and seek therefore to establish a dialogue with you.

Despite the fact that Facebook in the course of the last few days has changed its practice regarding this specific picture, we believe there is an urgent need for dialogue regarding Facebook's regulations for publishing/distribution of content from editor-controlled media outlets.

Facebook has become a world-leading platform for spreading information, for debate and social contact between people. For the members of the Association of Norwegian Editors Facebook has become one of the most important platforms for distribution of journalistic content. As such, the role that Facebook plays in this context is crucial - not only for Norwegian newsrooms but also for public debate in Norway and the rest of the world.

On this basis, we would like to invite you to our annual autumn conference in Oslo on October 31st. We hope you will accept this challenge and contribute to a more open and better dialogue.

Oslo, 15th September 2016

 

Harald Stanghelle Linda Hofstad Helleland

Chairman of the Association of Norwegian Editors Minister of Culture