

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON ROHINGYA COMPLAINT WITH THE OECD

Facebook was complicit in the 2017 ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya. Now, a team of survivors is taking an unprecedented step to demand justice.

By its actions and failures to act, Facebook (now Meta) contributed to the 2017 ethnic cleansing in Burma (Myanmar) that forced more than 750,000 Rohingya people from their homes. The social media giant not only provided a platform for hate speech directed against the Rohingya, their algorithms also amplified this content, ensuring more people saw disinformation designed to stoke violence. These actions make Facebook complicit in a pattern of mass, systematic violence that is ongoing today.

Worse still, the company has turned down opportunities to make amends. A group of Rohingya survivors in refugee camps in Bangladesh approached Facebook with a modest request: education facilities costing about \$1 million that would help address the urgent needs of school-age Rohingya children who have been deprived of an education. This request is scarcely a fraction of what the Rohingya are owed in compensation for Facebook's role in the ethnic cleansing. Yet the company refused to make even this small good-faith gesture. This left the survivors with no alternative but to appeal to international authorities.

Now, the survivors are lodging a formal complaint before the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This international body is charged with ensuring that corporations around the world respect human rights in their business practices. As the complaint documents in detail, Facebook's activities in Burma violated the OECD guidelines in multiple ways:



Facebook deliberately set out to increase their platform's use in Myanmar at the same time they were hosting targeted advertisements from the violent Burmese military. They also hosted the accounts of military officials, who used the platform to promote disinformation and hate speech against the Rohingya, and Facebook's algorithm amplified this content to a wider audience.



At the time of these events, Facebook did not have a human rights policy, and it failed to enforce its own limited content moderation standards. While the company has recently adopted a human rights policy, it provides no mechanism for compensating victims of the company's past actions.

If the Burmese military hadn't been able to publish false and defamatory content against the Rohingya, and if Facebook's content algorithms hadn't promoted this material, the 2017 campaign of mass, systematic violence against the Rohingya might never have occurred. And because Facebook contributed to the violence, it owes the Rohingya a remedy under international law. The Rohingya's complaint before the OECD represents a long-overdue step toward rectifying this wrong.



Here is what the victims of the ethnic cleansing are asking for:



REPARATIONS

Facebook should divert a portion of its profits earned in Myanmar in the months and years leading up to the systematic violence and provide remediation to the Rohingya in the form of education facilities or other facilities suitable to ameliorate their living conditions within the camps.

RESPONSIBILITY

Facebook should conduct due-diligence around the adverse human rights impacts of the data-mining and algorithmic aspects of its business model as a whole and publicly take responsibility for how its business model facilitated the ethnic cleansing campaign against the Rohingya in Burma and make a commitment to radical change.

REMEDICATION

Facebook should amend its human rights policy and the mandate of its Oversight Board to explicitly include remediation beyond content removal (such as rehabilitation or financial compensation) where it contributes to human rights violations.

REPRESENTATION

Facebook should create a community advisory board with representatives from the Rohingya and other populations that face oppression around the world, to be consulted over the development of a new human rights policy.