

FACEBOOK

July 15, 2020

To: International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), Georgia's Reforms Associates (GRASS), Transparency International - Georgia, Media Development Foundation (MDF), Shame Movement, Institute for Development of Freedom of Information (IDFI), Online media Publika - publika.ge, Journalism Resource Center, Green Alternative, Governance Monitoring Center, TV Formula, Atlantic Council of Georgia, Tabula Media, Economic Policy Research Center (EPRC), Georgian Institute of Politics (GIP), UN Association of Georgia (UNAG), Institute for Democracy and Safe Development (IDSD), Mtavari Channel, Union Sapari, Partnership for Human Rights, Europe Foundation, Human Rights Center, Georgian Democracy Initiative (GDI), Alliance of Broadcasters, Open Society Georgia Foundation, Democracy Research Institute, Tolerance and Diversity Institute (TDI), Caucasus Research Resource Center - Georgia, Media outlet Indigo, World Experience for Georgia (WEG), Center Empathy, Society and Banks, Liberal Academy Tbilisi, Online media On.ge, TV Pirveli, TV Kavkasia, Studio Monitor, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (Rondeli Foundation), Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), Internews Georgia, Tbilisi Pride, Georgia's Future Academy, ForSet, Human Rights Education and Monitoring Center (EMC), OC Media, IWPR Georgia, Georgian Charter of Journalistic Ethics, Internet Monitoring for Democratic Civil Action (IMDCA)

Thank you for the letter you addressed to Mark Zuckerberg and Nick Clegg on June 29, 2020 ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections in Georgia. I am Gabriella Cseh, Public Policy Director for Facebook in Central and Eastern Europe and I would like to address the important concerns you shared.

At Facebook, we know that we have an important responsibility when it comes to helping people participate in democratic processes and ensuring safe, secure, and free elections.

We have learnt a lot from the work led across the globe in the past few years and we have developed a global approach to protecting the elections on our platforms, which includes working to prevent the spread of false news, increasing the transparency of advertising, and identifying and removing fake accounts and harmful content. For each election happening globally, we set up a dedicated team of experts that looks at country-specific risks related to our platforms, to ensure we can deploy country-specific measures that are locally relevant. In this process, we work in close consultation with partners on the ground, who provide valuable context on domestic trends.

[Since June 2019](#), our ads transparency authorizations and Ad Library have been available in Georgia for voluntary use and we have strongly encouraged advertisers to get authorized and add the proper disclaimers to ads about elections or politics. Information such as when a Page was created, if the Page has changed its name, and admin location is already visible in the Ad Library for any page.

Starting in early August 2020, we will require authorizations for ads about elections and politics in Georgia. This will offer an unprecedented level of transparency and authenticity around these ads, so people can see who's trying to influence their vote ahead of the elections and why.

Our requirements include:

- **Identity confirmation:** We require advertisers to get authorized in Georgia if they want to run ads about elections or politics targeting the country. Advertisers that want to run these ads must prove who they are by providing an ID issued in Georgia.

- **Link your ad accounts to your Page:** “Business Country” must be the country the advertisers reside in; “Currency” must be the accepted currency for the country [listed on the Help Center here](#).
- **Disclaimers:** Ads about elections or politics must include “Paid for by” disclaimers which show the organization or person behind the ad and advertisers must now provide more information for Facebook to confirm this – such as their address, phone number, email, and website – all of which are included in the public Ad Library for seven years.
- **Ad Library:** We store electoral or political ads in the publicly searchable [Ad Library](#) for seven years, and we provide people with insights such as a range of how much was spent on the ad and how many people saw the ad. With more information made available, regulators, journalists, and our community can quickly raise questions or concerns and help hold advertisers accountable if they find anything out of the ordinary. In addition to the Ad Library, starting in early September, anyone will be able to explore, filter and download data for ads about social issues, elections or politics through the [Ad Library Report](#) and the [Ad Library API](#).

You can learn more about our efforts and download our updated step-by-step information in our [one-sheeter](#). In the coming weeks, we will be reaching out to political advertisers to ensure they have the necessary tools to comply with our Ads Transparency requirements.

Moreover, we’re constantly working to find and stop coordinated campaigns that seek to manipulate public debate across our apps. We're investing heavily in security so we can find and address these kinds of threats. We've improved our AI so that we can more effectively detect and block fake accounts, which are the source of a lot of the inauthentic activity. We've more than tripled the number of people who work on security and safety issues overall to more than 35,000, including security experts, AI and machine learning engineers, and content reviewers.

In 2019 alone, we took down over 50 networks worldwide for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB), including ahead of major democratic elections. As you noted, these takedowns included a number of influence operations targeting Georgia. Our teams remain focused on finding, disrupting and exposing these influence campaigns, no matter where they come from or who is behind them.

We know that these actors - whether domestic or foreign - will keep trying to use these tactics across platforms, worldwide. Our teams will continue to look for, take down and expose them. As part of that work, we focus on two things. First, we monitor for efforts to re-establish a presence on Facebook by networks we previously removed for CIB. Using both automated and manual detection, we continuously remove accounts and Pages connected to all networks we took down in the past. Second, because we’ve seen that these influence operations are rarely confined to one platform, we focus on building partnerships with civil society and industry. These partnerships and collaboration help us ensure that when a threat emerges on one platform, we can work together to shut it down everywhere. The takedowns referenced below are good examples of that work where our investigation benefited from public reporting in the region.

In [January 2019](#), we removed 364 Facebook Pages and accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior as part of a network that originated in Russia and operated in the Baltics, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Central and Eastern European countries. Among other things, these actors represented themselves as independent news Pages or general interest Pages on topics like weather, travel, sports, economics, or politicians in Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan. We linked this activity that relied on fake accounts and other deceptive tactics to employees of Sputnik, a news agency based in Moscow.

In [December 2019](#), we removed 39 Facebook accounts, 344 Pages, 13 Groups and 22 Instagram accounts as part of a domestic-focused network that originated in Georgia. Although the people

behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation linked this activity to Panda, an advertising agency in Georgia, and the Georgian Dream-led government.

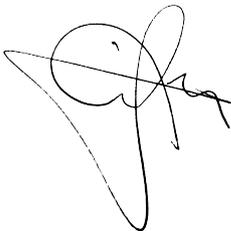
Most recently, in [April 2020](#), we removed two separate domestic-focused networks in Georgia. One included 511 Pages, 101 Facebook accounts, and 122 Groups, and 56 Instagram accounts. Our investigation linked this network to Espersona, a media firm in Georgia. This organization is now banned from our platforms. We found this activity as part of our investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior publicly reported by a local fact-checking organization in Georgia with some links to our past takedown. The second domestic network consisted of 23 Facebook accounts, 80 Pages, 41 Groups, and 9 Instagram accounts linked to individuals associated with the political party United National Movement. We found this activity as part of our investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region, and our assessment benefited from local public reporting in Georgia.

We are making progress rooting out abuse on our platform but we know we can't protect elections alone. Everyone plays a part in keeping the platform safe and respectful. We're committed to continually improving to stay ahead. That means building better technology, hiring more people and working more closely with law enforcement, security experts and other companies.

We welcome and value the input and feedback from organizations and civil society representatives, civic activists and media representatives as well as members of our Community more in general. We ask people to share responsibly and to let us know when they see something that may violate our [Advertising Policies](#) and [Community Standards](#). Our approach is iterative as we are always learning and making improvements so that we can prevent foreign interference in an ever changing landscape.

I hope that this exchange will be the beginning of a fruitful collaboration and we look forward to being in contact with you in the coming months. To that end, please refer to my colleague **Kateryna Kruk**, Public Policy Regional Manager in Central and Eastern Europe, as your main point of contact for any further questions or concerns regarding Facebook in Georgia. Kateryna will be best placed to discuss areas of collaboration, in the context of elections and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Cseh', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Gabriella Cseh, Public Policy Director for Central and Eastern Europe, Facebook