



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Laura Clare, Director of Communications - Europe, Middle East and Africa at Instagram
Instagram UK
42 Earlham Street
London
WC2H 9LH

7 June 2019

Dear Laura,

Content Censorship – Abdullah Ocalan and freedom from torture

I am writing following the removal from my Instagram account (@rossgreer) of two posts, the first of which was posted on February 15th and removed on May 10th and the second posted April 4th and removed June 4th.

Both posts covered the same topic, namely the imprisoned Kurdish leader Abdullah Ocalan. The first post was of a mural dedicated to Ocalan on the world famous international walls by the Falls Road in West Belfast, calling for his release and featuring a quote in which Mr Ocalan advocates for peace.

The second was a photo of myself addressing a demonstration outside the Scottish Parliament, with flags in the background bearing Mr Ocalan's likeness. The demonstration was to raise attention to his isolated imprisonment and the many thousands of Kurdish activists across Europe who were at that point on hunger strike demanding an end to Ocalan's isolation.

As you may be aware, Mr Ocalan is recognised by many millions of Kurds as a leader in their struggle for basic rights and freedoms. He is also a noted political theorist, advocating radical models of democracy, placing particular emphasis on the role of women at every level of society.

Mr Ocalan has been held by the Turkish government on Imrali island prison for twenty years, during which time his rights have been systematically breached and he has been subject to extreme solitary

Ross Greer MSP for the West of Scotland
Scottish Green Party

MG.21 Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP
0131 348 6347 | ross.greer.msp@parliament.scot



confinement, a recognised form of torture which runs counter to the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, also known as the Mandela Rules

The Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) visited Imrali prison before publishing a report in March 2018. This followed previous visits and reports where the Committee condemned the treatment of Mr Ocalan and other prisoners.

It is also worth noting that in 2005 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Turkish government had violated Articles 3,5 and 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights by denying Mr Ocalan any effective remedy to what was then his death sentence. He was denied a retrial by the Turkish courts.

The 2018 CPT report called for Mr Ocalan and other prisoners on the island to be allowed visits from their relatives and lawyers. This is something Mr Ocalan had been denied since 2011, despite over eight hundred requests by his lawyers. It is also exactly what we were calling for at the demonstration outside the Scottish Parliament at which the photo in the second aforementioned post was taken.

These international efforts were successful and Mr Ocalan's lawyer was subsequently given access to his client. His brother was also able to visit him earlier this year.

Given the above, I would like to request the following from Instagram:

- An explanation as to exactly why both of the posts you deleted from my account were found to have broken your community guidelines
- Clarification of your position in regards to the permissibility of user content which is supportive of rulings of the Committee for the Prevention of Torture and/or European Court of Human Rights
- Confirmation of Instagram's policy in relation to content which features the likeness, name, quotations or writings of Abdullah Ocalan
- An explanation of how this compares to Instagram policy with regards to other former leaders or advocates of armed struggle but who subsequently advocated peace and cooperation, such as Nelson Mandela or those involved in Northern Ireland's peace process

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- What importance Instagram places on the ability of elected representatives to freely express views in support of peace and human rights on your platform

In answering the above questions, I hope and expect that you will recognise that neither of my posts breached Instagram's community guidelines and subsequently, that you reinstate both posts.

I look forward to your response.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ross Greer', written in a cursive style.

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