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**VIA E-MAIL**

March 22, 2021

House Committee On Energy and Commerce  
United States Congress, Washington, DC 20515  
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**Re: March 25<sup>th</sup> Hearing On “Disinformation Nation: Social Media's Role in Promoting Extremism and Misinformation”.**

**Sub: Twitter, Google and Facebook Are Collaborating With The Indian Government In Suppressing The First Amendment Rights of The Americans.**

Honorable Chairman Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Ranking Member Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
And Members of the Committee

My name is Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. I am an attorney admitted to practice by the State of New York. My main area of practice is human rights and civil rights. I am also General Counsel to US based international advocacy group “Sikhs For Justice” (SFJ). SFJ’s aim and objective is to raise awareness about the human rights issues being faced by the Sikh people in India, including seeking right to self-determination through the democratic means of Referendum.

On behalf of the Sikh Americans who follow and support SFJ, I am writing to convey to the Committee, the pressing concerns and related questions which we urge to be raised during the March 25th Sub-Committee Hearing titled "Disinformation Nation: Social Media's Role in Promoting Extremism and Misinformation."

It is indeed reassuring that this Committee is taking up the issue which impacts the lives of billions of people across the globe and role of social media giants, Google, Facebook and Twitter, which has been of indifference towards the problem, giving free pass to the violent narratives at home and abroad while at the same time willingly collaborating with fascist regimes like Modi Government of India in suppressing the freedom of expression of Americans.

The most recent and pressing issue is that in the wake of ongoing farmers protest in India, Twitter, Facebook and Google have been collaborating with the Indian authorities in suppressing the freedom of speech of not only of farmers in India but also of fellow Americans. We, therefore, urge that during March 25th hearing, Zuckerberg, Pichai and Dorsey be asked:

**Q.1:** Why Facebook, Google and Twitter are actively suppressing the First Amendment Rights of American Citizens by blocking their content and removing their accounts at the request of the Modi Govt. in the wake of ongoing farmers protest?

**Q.2:** As CEO of American Corporations, how do you justify the blocking/deleting within America the First Amendment protected content and accounts on the request of the Indian Government?

**Q.3:** Why Google, Twitter and Facebook are actively complying with Indian laws in American territory regarding blocking and deleting First Amendment protected accounts and content of fellow Americans?

**Q.4:** Is it true that Twitter, Google and Facebook, unbeknownst to the American users, has shared their personal information with Indian authorities, as reported by New York Times on February 10, 2021?

**Note:** We are not questioning the blocking of access in India to the content posted by Americans. Our Question is only about blocking within America of the US Citizen’s first amendment protected content.



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Honorable Chairman and Members, besides myself, whose several First Amendment protected content – advocacy for Sikhs Right to Self Determination through Khalistan Referendum - and associated accounts have been deleted by Twitter, Google and Facebook, I present to this esteemed Committee, the following specific, recent and egregious examples of these America corporations’ collaboration with India in suppressing the freedom of speech of the Sikhs and other fellow Americans.

**TWITTER:**

On February 10, 2021, New York Times reported that Twitter received about 5,500 demands from Indian government to block content or remove the accounts altogether and around 5,900 requests for access to the personal information of users. See “Twitter Blocks Accounts in India as Modi Pressures Social Media”. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/10/technology/india-twitter.html>

**Google:**

On the request of the Indian Government, Google removed the app “2020 Sikh Referendum” from its Play-Store. The app was prepared and launched by American NGO “Sikhs For Justice” (SFJ) and was facilitating Sikh people in USA, India and everywhere to register in NGO’s proposed non-governmental referendum. The app was not violating any US Law and thus removing this at the behest of Indian Government clearly violated First Amendment rights of the US Citizens. <https://www.thestatesman.com/technology/google-takes-pro-khalistan-2020-sikh-referendum-app-play-store-1502824147.html>

Google owned platform Youtube removed channels run by American Sikhs solely on the request of Indian government. India sought removal of the channels for relaying the content critical of Modi Government's policies. In one of the many such cases, Youtube blocked and removed the channel “Khabardar Punjab” which was being run and operated by the American Citizens sitting in the United States, solely on the request of Government of India. [https://theprint.in/india/governance/these-are-the-apps-and-websites-modi-govt-blocked-in-2020/623337/?utm\\_source=izooto&utm\\_medium=push\\_notification&utm\\_campaign=ThePrint&utm](https://theprint.in/india/governance/these-are-the-apps-and-websites-modi-govt-blocked-in-2020/623337/?utm_source=izooto&utm_medium=push_notification&utm_campaign=ThePrint&utm)

**Facebook:**

On the behest of Indian Government, Facebook has blocked and removed several Accounts and Pages of American citizens supporting ongoing farmers' protest and non-governmental referendum for Khalistan. In one of the many such case, Facebook has blocked access to the page of American NGO Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) [www.facebook.com/sikhsforjusticepage](http://www.facebook.com/sikhsforjusticepage) in India on the request of the Indian Government. *Sikhs for Justice “SFJ”, Inc. v. Facebook, Inc.*, 697 F. App’x 526 (9th Cir. 2017)

In addition to the above, recently, Twitter removed American lawyer-cum activist Meena Harris’ tweet supporting farmers’ right to protest while allowed the brazen calls for violence against Ms. Harris by the supporters of PM Modi. American singer Rihanna was threatened with violence on twitter by the people of Indian descent in response to her tweet supporting farmers’ right to protest. While Twitter did remove the violent Tweets against Rihanna, it also complied with Indian government’s request to block the content critical of Modi Government.

The above cited cases show that how Facebook, Google and Twitter, on one hand are colluding and collaborating with Indian Government in suppressing the freedom of expression of Americans and on the other hand are freely allowing violence instigating content against critics of Modi Government to be posted and spread through their platforms.

Honorable Congress Members, we are certain that significance of “freedom of speech” and First Amendment being the bedrock of American democracy and in fact of any true democracy, is of prime importance for you and hence our request for probe into the role of Google, Twitter and Facebook in the ongoing violations of First Amendment rights of Americans at the behest of Indian Government.

Respectfully submitted

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