Facebook to update its community standards to clarify what it considers satire

Following a recommendation from its Oversight Board, Facebook says it will update its community standards to be clearer about how it handles satirical content, the company said in a blog post.

“We’ll add information to the Community Standards that makes it clear where we consider satire as part of our assessment of context-specific decisions,” according to the post. “This change will allow teams to consider satire when assessing potential Hate Speech violations.”

The update comes after the Oversight Board determined that Facebook was wrong to remove a user’s comment with a reference to the Turkish government, based on the two buttons meme. The Oversight Board described it:

> *This meme featured the same split-screen cartoon from the original meme, but with the cartoon character’s face substituted for a Turkish flag. The cartoon character has their right hand on their head and appears to be sweating. Above the cartoon character, in the other half of the split-screen, there are two red buttons with corresponding labels, in English: “The Armenian Genocide is a lie” and “The Armenians were terrorists who deserved it.” The meme was preceded and followed by “thinking face” emoji.*

Facebook removed the post, citing its Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard, which says it will remove posts that target “victims of serious physical or emotional harm,” which includes the use of memes and gifs. Facebook later reclassified the removal so it fell under its Hate Speech Community Standard.

The Oversight Board pointed out in its recommendation that while Facebook has said it will make exceptions for satire, it doesn’t specify how or what qualifies as satire in its guidelines. Facebook said in its post that in addition to making its guidelines around satire clearer, it would “initiate a review of identical content with parallel context,” and may take further action.

This marks the latest instance of Facebook following the guidance of its fledgling Oversight Board. Earlier this month, Facebook said would end its so-called “newsworthiness” policy, which allowed politicians to skirt many of its content rules. Going forward the company “will not treat content posted by politicians any differently from content posted by anyone else,” Facebook’s Nick Clegg said in a blog post.

https://www.theverge.com/2021/6/19/22541349/facebook-update-community-standards-satire-oversight-board