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People with Disabilities

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American Federation of Teachers

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Asian Americans Advancing Justice |
AAJC

President and CEO
Maya Wiley

June 22, 2022

Mark Zuckerberg
Chief Executive Officer
Meta Platforms, Inc.
1 Hacker Way
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Sundar Pichai
Chief Executive Officer
Alphabet Inc.
1600 Amphitheatre Parkway
Mountain View, CA 94043

Shou Zi Chew
Chief Executive Officer
TikTok
5800 Bristol Parkway, Suite 100
Culver City, CA 90230

Susan Wojcicki
Chief Executive Officer
YouTube LLC
901 Cherry Avenue
San Bruno, CA 94066

Parag Agrawal
Chief Executive Officer
Twitter, Inc.
1355 Market Street, Suite 900
San Francisco, CA 94103

Andy Jassy
Chief Executive Officer
Amazon.com, Inc.
410 Terry Avenue North
Seattle, WA 98109

Dear Mr. Zuckerberg, Mr. Pichai, Ms. Wojcicki, Mr. Agrawal, Mr. Chew, and Mr. Jassy:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 230 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States we urge you to take immediate action to address the scourge of hate speech and racist content across your platforms and find solutions to protect targeted communities from the dangers, prevalence, and spread of violent white supremacy in this country.

The internet has created immense positive value by connecting people, facilitating civil rights advocacy, and adding new voices to our culture and public debate. However, it can also enable discriminatory conduct; exacerbate existing disparities; and provide new tools to those who want to threaten, harass, and intimidate those different from themselves. In the worst of circumstances, people have used the internet to inflict irreparable harm and violence on others.

The shooter who targeted a predominately Black neighborhood in Buffalo on May 14 followed the path of other fame-seeking perpetrators of mass violence by utilizing online platforms, posting racist manifestos, and livestreaming video footage of the massacre. Violent white supremacists have exploited online platforms to further their cause, amplify their message, and increase the impacts of trauma and devastation beyond a single community.

The deadly shooting in Buffalo was tragically not the first time platforms were faced with the need to rapidly remove content before it became viral. In the wake of the Christchurch, New Zealand, massacre, which was livestreamed on Facebook for more than 12 minutes, social media platforms, including Facebook, acknowledged the need to do more.

We recognize that quick actions were taken to stop the spread of the Buffalo shooting, including Twitch taking down the shooter's stream within two minutes. But that did not prevent the video from spreading widely on other sites. Indeed, several days after the attack, the video was still circulating.

For years, we have urged major tech platforms to take responsibility for ensuring that their products and business processes protect civil and human rights and do not result in harm or bias against historically marginalized groups, but they have failed to take sufficient action. As a result, white supremacists continue to use platforms to incite racist violence on multiple platforms against Asian Americans, African Americans, Jews, Muslims, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ people.

We urge you to immediately:

- Review your policies relating to who can livestream content and further invest in technologies to identify edited versions of videos intended to dodge artificial intelligence. For example, companies should consider only allowing livestream capabilities for individual users who are verified.
- Conduct assessments of your response to the Buffalo tragedy, including the efficiency of practices put in place by the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism and how to strengthen those practices.
- Provide information about the steps you have already taken and will be taking to stop the spread of this and other white supremacist content going forward. Reports have emerged that the shooter was motivated by white supremacist content and groups that are active on social media.

Platforms have the tools and the ability to respond effectively to these concerns if they only had the will. Platforms must consistently enforce their own policies to stop the spread of hate speech. Despite having prohibitions against the posting of hate speech, online racially charged content is still rampant on your platforms.

We are ready to work with your companies to find solutions that can prevent the spread of this content and protect targeted communities and their civil rights. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Nadia Aziz, senior director for fighting hate and bias, at aziz@civilrights.org or Dave Toomey, voting rights and technology fellow, at toomey@civilrights.org.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maya Wiley".

Maya Wiley
President and CEO

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jesselyn McCurdy".

Jesselyn McCurdy
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs