Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Are social media contributing to limiting freedom of expression?

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Ms Ingjerd SCHOU and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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Social media, such as Facebook, have developed from social networking platforms to channels for dissemination of news, information and debates. For many Facebook is the main, if not only, source of news and information. Facebook, and other social media, claim not to have an editorial role and responsibility, yet there are numerous examples of statements and photographs being removed from individual users' pages.

A recent example is the blocking of the iconic photograph of the "Napalm Girl" from the Vietnam War. Facebook's zero tolerance of nudity was given as a reason. This is one example which illustrates that Facebook is not distinguishing between actual pornography and iconic historical photos. There are also examples of art and photographs with an educational purpose being removed.

As the leading social media platform Facebook should be given credit for their efforts in combatting child pornography. However, this example, where also written statements criticising Facebook for removing the picture were blocked, gives reason for concern about Facebook's regard for freedom of expression and their recognition of the responsibility they have as one of the biggest providers of news and information. It shows that the rules and regulations the company bases its decisions on are unclear.

This shows that Facebook's and other social medias' role as news providers and the editorial responsibility that this entails should be studied and discussed.

The Parliamentary Assembly should analyse and consider the role of social media when it comes to the basic human right to freedom of expression. The consequences for the rule of law should also be considered.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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