

# Meta oversight board orders firm to take down video by Cambodian leader

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Meta's content moderation board has ordered the social media company to take down a video of the Cambodian prime minister threatening his political opponents with violence, and urged it to suspend his Facebook and Instagram accounts. The oversight board, whose decisions on content are binding, overturned Meta's decision to leave up a video on Facebook in which Hun Sen issued a number of threats. It also called for an immediate six-month suspension of Hun Sen's Facebook page, which has 14 million followers, and his Instagram account, which has 167,000 followers. Hun Sen, who has led Cambodia for nearly four decades, announced before the ruling on Thursday that he would stop using Facebook and move to the Telegram messaging service instead, although he would still use Instagram. On 9 January 2023, Hun Sen's official Facebook page livestreamed a speech by the PM responding to allegations that his ruling Cambodia People's party had stolen votes during local elections last year. In the speech he said opponents who had made the allegations should choose between the "legal system" and "a bat", but if they did not choose the legal system he would "gather CPP people to protest and beat you up". He also referred to "sending gangsters to [your] house", although he added later "we don't incite people and encourage people to use force". The video was then uploaded on to Hun Sen's Facebook page and has been viewed 600,000 times. An initial review found the speech did not violate Meta's content policies. A second review found the video did violate company guidelines but kept it up under Meta's "newsworthiness allowance", in which rule-breaking content is allowed because the public interest value outweighs the risk of it causing harm. The Hun Sen ruling and recommendation follows the board's adjudication on Meta's decision to ban Donald Trump from Facebook and Instagram in 2021 after the Capitol riot. As part of its decision upholding the suspension, which Meta has subsequently lifted, the board had asked the company to clarify its newsworthiness policy. In response, Meta said in deciding whether content should be kept up under "newsworthiness" criteria it balanced public interest and the risk of harm. The board said Meta's decision to keep up the video was wrong and that Meta had "rewarded" Hun Sen's behaviour, which has included a "sustained" campaign of harassment and intimidation against independent media and the political opposition. Because the board's content decisions are binding, Meta will now have to remove the video. "The board finds that Meta was wrong to apply a newsworthiness allowance in this case, as the harm caused by allowing the content on the platform outweighs the post's public interest value," the board wrote. Calling for changes to the newsworthiness policy, which is not a binding recommendation, the board added: "The board urges Meta to clarify that its policy on restricting the accounts of public figures is not limited solely to single incidents of violence and civil unrest, but also applies to contexts in which citizens are under continuing threat of retaliatory violence

from their governments.” The board recommended that content inciting violence did not receive a newsworthiness waiver and that material from heads of state and senior government figures inciting violence should be immediately prioritised for review. Meta declined to comment.