

Facebook Names 20 ‘Supreme Court’ Members With Power to Overrule Mark Zuckerberg

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Two years after CEO Mark Zuckerberg first mentioned its creation, Facebook on Wednesday unveiled the initial 20 members of its new “oversight board”; the board will effectively act as Facebook’s supreme court, ruling on what content is and isn’t allowed to remain posted on its platform. The board will have the final word on all things related to Facebook’s content moderation policies and, according to Zuckerberg, will be able to overrule any executive’s moderation decisions.

Facebook’s oversight board is split evenly between male and female members from more than two dozen countries. It’s an eclectic mix that includes several law professors, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the former prime minister of Denmark, and the newspaper editor who published Edward Snowden’s leaked documents.

The oversight board is expected to step in when it comes to making tough choices on what content is kosher for Facebook. In recent years, the social network has been ripped by many on both the left and the right for its seemingly arbitrary content moderation policies. (Most recently, Facebook was criticized last fall for not removing political ads containing lies. Zuckerberg said in response “people should decide what’s credible, not tech companies.”) Moving forward, Zuckerberg and Co. will be able to hand off responsibility to the oversight board when it comes to difficult content moderation decisions.

“We expect them to make some decisions that we, at Facebook, will not always agree with – but that’s the point: they are truly autonomous in their exercise of independent judgment,” Facebook VP Nick Clegg said on Wednesday. “We also expect that the board’s membership itself will face criticism. But its long-term success depends on it having members who bring different perspectives and expertise to bear.”

Eventually, the oversight board is expected to hit 40 members. Here’s a quick look at the first 20 people to join:

- **Afia Asantewaa Asare-Kyei (Senegal):** program manager of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa

- **Evelyn Aswad (U.S.):** University of Oklahoma law professor, specializing in “the application of international human rights standards,” per Facebook
- **Endy Bayuni (Indonesia):** Senior editor at Jakarta Post and the executive director of the International Association of Religion Journalists
- **Catalina Botero-Marino (Columbia):** Dean of the Universidad de Los Andes law school, and has also served as an alternate judge of the Colombian Constitutional Court; she’ll serve as co-chair of the board
- **Katherine Chen (Taiwan):** Communications professor at the National Chengchi University
- **Nighat Dad (Pakistan):** Director of the Digital Rights Foundation, a non-profit focused on free speech online and cyber harassment
- **Jamal Greene, (U.S.):** Columbia Law School professor, focused on constitutional rights. He recently served as Senior Visiting Scholar at the Knight First Amendment Institute; board co-chair
- **Pamela Karlan (U.S.):** Stanford law professor and co-director of the university’s Supreme Court Litigation Clinic
- **Tawakkol Karman (Yemen):** Nobel Peace Prize laureate known for “promoting non-violent change in Yemen during the Arab Spring,” per Facebook
- **Maina Kiai (Kenya):** Director of HumanRights Watch’s global alliances and partnerships program and former head of Kenya’s National Commission on Human Rights
- **Sudhir Krishnaswamy (India):** Vice Chancellor of the National Law School of India University
- **Ronaldo Lemos (Brazil):** Co-founder of the non-profit Institute for Technology and Society and professor at Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro
- **Michael McConnell (U.S.):** A former U.S. Court of Appeals judge and current director of the Constitutional Law Center at Stanford; he’ll co-chair lonside Greene and Botero-Marino
- **Julie Owono (France):** Executive Director of Internet Sans Frontieres, and a fellow at Harvard’s Berkman Klein Center for Internet and Society
- **Emi Palmor (Israel):** Former Director General of Israel’s Ministry of Justice
- **Alan Rusbridger (U.K.):** Former editor-in-chief of The Guardian, where he published Snowden’s leaked national security documents
- **Andras Sajó (Hungary):** Founding Dean of Legal Studies at Central European University and a former VP of the European Court of Human Rights
- **John Samples (U.S.):** Founder of The Cato Institute’s Center for Representative Government and advocate for free speech online

- **Nicolas Suzor (Australia):** Queensland University law professor
- **Helle Thorning-Schmidt (Denmark):** The former prime minister of Denmark who currently serves on a number of corporate boards and is a member of the U.S. council on Foreign Relations