

THE VERGE

Facebook's oversight board will include a former prime minister and Nobel Prize winner

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On Wednesday, Facebook's oversight board announced the names of its first 20 members, who will independently oversee moderation disputes on the platform. Chosen in part for a diversity of viewpoints and backgrounds, the members include a former prime minister, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and the *Guardian* editor who oversaw the publication of the Snowden leaks.

Facebook first announced [its plans to launch an oversight board in November 2018](#). In the months following that announcement, the company published a [charter and bylaws](#) under which the body will be governed. The group will begin choosing cases to hear this summer.

To build the board's membership, Facebook recruited four co-chairs to lead the body. These include two American professors of constitutional law — Michael McConnell from Stanford and Jamal Greene from Columbia Law — who have written extensively on the procedures of judicial oversight in the US system. They are joined by Catalina Botero-Marino, dean of a prominent law school in Colombia, and Helle Thorning-Schmidt, former prime minister of Denmark. These co-chairs authored [an op-ed in the *New York Times* Wednesday](#) describing its recruitment procedures and how the body intends to operate.

The board's membership spans various political backgrounds. Vice president of the libertarian Cato Institute, John Samples, is a founding member and has written extensively in opposition of efforts from the US government to [regulate content moderation on social media](#). Alan Rusbridger, former editor-in-chief of *The Guardian*, [handled the publication's coverage of the Snowden leaks](#) in 2013 and will also sit on the board. [In an op-ed for *OneZero*](#), Rusbridger wrote "Some of the challenges Facebook is grappling with are familiar, albeit on a vastly different scale. Others are issues that no one has ever, in history, had to think about." He continued, "Will it work? Let's see. There is, in my view, no excuse for not trying."

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Tawakkol Karman, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate from Yemen, came to prominence for her activism during the Arab Spring. All told, the first group of members "have lived in over 27 countries, and speak at least 29 languages," according to a Wednesday press release.

These board members are not Facebook employees and the company says that it cannot remove them. The board's decisions will be public, and Brent Harris, Facebook's director of public

policy, told reporters that the company “will implement the board’s decisions unless doing so violates the law.” Over the next few months, the body expects to grow to around 40 total members.

These decisions are expected to advise content moderation guidelines for Facebook and Instagram. WhatsApp, a Facebook property, will not fall under the board’s rulings due to “privacy and encryption reasons,” according to Greene.

“While we cannot claim to represent everyone,” Facebook said in a blog post on Wednesday, “we are confident that our global composition will underpin, strengthen and guide our decision-making.”