

Jews pressure Facebook over Palestinian page

by [Nicole Neroulis](#)

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(RNS) Facebook shut down a "Third Palestinian Intifada" page and similar groups this week, prompted by complaints from Jewish groups that the content had crossed the line from free speech to violent incitement.

The campaign has raised questions about whether Facebook should be used to facilitate some popular uprisings but not others, and even whether Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg has lost touch with his family's Jewish roots.

Inspired by the successful use of social media to fuel popular protests in Egypt and elsewhere, the intifada fan page had amassed more than 300,000 "likes" from users for its proposed May 15 uprising before disappearing Tuesday (March 29).

Facebook, which has more than 500 million users worldwide, prohibits content that is "hateful, threatening, or pornographic; incites violence; or contains nudity or graphic or gratuitous violence."

The intifada page was permitted as long as the creators maintained a theme of peaceful protest and deleted violent postings. But as the controversy grew, with Israeli officials and Jewish groups urging Facebook to take down the pages, the content deteriorated.

The Anti-Defamation League, which had criticized Facebook's initial decision to permit the page, applauded the company's reversal.

"We hope that they will continue to vigilantly monitor their pages for other groups that call for violence or terrorism against Jews and Israel," said the ADL's national director, Abraham Foxman. "We look forward to continuing our dialogue with Facebook on issues of mutual concern, including hate speech, Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism."

The dispute has resurrected long-simmering concerns among some groups over Zuckerberg's perceived lack of solidarity with the Jewish people.

Zuckerberg was raised in a Jewish home and belonged to Alpha Epsilon Pi, a historically Jewish fraternity, before dropping out of Harvard University in 2004. He has since described himself as an atheist, however, and his longtime girlfriend is not Jewish.

Even before the intifada controversy, users had already created several Facebook sites about Zuckerberg's religion, including "Join us to tell Mark Zuckerberg about his moral duty to support Israel" and "Why is Mark Zuckerberg a self-hating Jew?"

None of the official requests to Zuckerberg regarding the intifada page had tried appealing to his Jewish roots.

"ADL does not make appeals based on a person's religious identity," explained Deborah Lauter, the ADL's civil rights director, in a statement. "We have appealed to Mark Zuckerberg -- and his colleagues -- in their professional capacities, including their sense of reason, decency and fairness."

In 2009, prompted by the existence of Holocaust-denial groups on the site, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs accused Facebook of creating "an anti-Semitic policy platform where the only explicitly allowed hate is that, within certain parameters, directed against Jews."

The first Palestinian intifada began in 1987; the second uprising began in 2000. The proposed third intifada date is May 15, which Palestinians mourn as Nakba Day, or Catastrophe Day, marking the day after the 1948 establishment of Israel, when hundreds of thousands of Arabs fled or were expelled from their homes.