

Universal Health Organisation (UHO)

Weekly Newsletter – 30 Aug 2024



The weekly newsletters bring the updates on the science, battered and bruised during the pandemic, legal updates and impact of activism for a just society, across the world. These are small steps to promote Transparency, Empowerment and Accountability – the ethos of the UHO.

Announcement: Membership & endorsements to the UHO invited: <https://uho.org.in/member.php>

Curbing of freedom of expression in modern democracies: The Tale of Two “Zuckerbergs.”

Facebook Founder accuses the Biden administration of pressurizing social media platforms.

Mark Zuckerberg the founder and chief of Facebook (now called Meta), has accused the [Biden Administration of pressurizing the social media](#) group Meta (which includes platforms like Instagram, WhatsApp, Threads, and others in addition to Facebook), during the pandemic to censor Covid-19 content, including humor and satire.

In hindsight, Zuckerberg thinks that the USA government action was wrong, and he regrets that he did not push back. He further expressed that social media platforms should not compromise content standards due to pressure from governments irrespective of party politics, and he intends to push back if such demand for censorship happens again. He conveyed this in a letter to Jim Jordan the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee of the US Senate. He also [tweeted](#) this letter on X. Zuckerberg also said that his donation of \$400 million, which was with an intent to ensure that appropriate voting resources are in place during the pandemic has been misinterpreted that he is supporting one party over the other. He emphasized, “My goal is to be neutral and not play a role one way or another – or to even appear to be playing a role. So I don’t plan to make a similar contribution this cycle.”

This revelation by Mark Zuckerberg comes at a time when social media censorship is being hotly debated with Elon Musk who took over Twitter (now renamed X), a strong advocate of free speech one hand, and a recent setback of this with the arrest of Telegram chief executive Parel Durov in France over an investigation into alleged moderation failures on the messaging app.

Well you win some and lose some. UHO entertains guarded optimism at these development with two social media platform giants Zuckerberg and Musk advocating for free speech and expression at a crucial time when the [WHO Pandemic Treaty](#) is looming over us with strict provisions for censorship and other authoritarian measures. Let us hope these two stalwarts stand up to the threat of censorship as envisaged in the proposed WHO Pandemic Treaty and amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR).

Telegram Founder often referred as the “Russian Mark Zuckerberg” arrested in France

French authorities have [detained Telegram founder Pavel Durov](#) over the messaging app’s lack of moderation of alleged criminal activity on the platform, including spread of child sex abuse material. Pavel Durov, called the “Russian Mark Zuckerberg” for founding the social platform Vkontakte (VK) – dubbed the Facebook of Russia, was born in 1984 in the Soviet Union. In 2013, he was pressurized by the Russian government to hand over data of Ukrainian users which he refused. After this altercation he sold his shares and left Russia. VK, the Russian equivalent of Facebook is now state controlled. Presently he is based in Dubai and has UAE and French citizenships. According to him, “For me, it was never about becoming rich. Everything in my life was about becoming free.” In spite of his differences with Russia, after his arrest by the French authorities, the Russian government has started working on his behalf.

Closer home, the Telegram’s encryption has been misused for illegal activities, like the recent [leaks](#) of the NEET-UG papers. Telegram’s security features allow users to maintain anonymity keeping their identities such as names, numbers, and photos confidential based on their settings. This authorities allege, makes it easier for individuals to commit crimes without being detected. Telegram is under probe by the Indian Cybercrime

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Mr. Prakash Pohare, Dr Veena Raghava (Treasurer), Prof Bhaskaran Raman (Secretary), Dr. Praveen K Saxena,
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Coordination Centre and its P2P (peer to peer) app is under the scanner.

A statement issued by Telegram says, “It is absurd to claim that a platform or its owner are responsible for abuse of the platform.” It further said that the arrest of the Telegram founder was an assault free speech worldwide. Worldwide supporters see him as a freedom of speech champion.

The arrest of Durov has triggered a fierce debate pitting free speech advocates like Musk and lately Zuckerberg against governments. Telegram became popular by offering itself as a free speech platform. While this helped people around the world air their views, particularly criticism of authoritarian governments (which includes almost all governments post pandemic), pro-censorship critics have alleged that the app has been allegedly abused for various kinds of illegal activities.

UHO is of the opinion is that the arrest of the Telegram founder amounts to “shooting the messenger” despite messenger having no direct responsibility for the bad news or its consequences. Guns around the world, notably USA, are responsible for murders, and mass shootings and still there are no gun control laws or the manufacturers of guns sent to jail. The criminal behind the gun is nabbed not the manufacturer. Similarly, Telegram is a tool for free exchange of thought and those who misuse it for criminal activities should be caught rather than the founder. We fear that if world governments accede to the WHO Pandemic Treaty such arrests would become the norm.

The French national motto, "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity), encapsulates the ideals of the French Revolution. It represents freedom for all, equality before the law, and brotherhood or solidarity among the people, reflecting the core values of the French Republic. Alas, the ethos of freedom and democracy envisaged in this national motto of France is being ignored in the 21st century.

Canadian Class Action Lawsuit against illegal push for Covid vaccines by governments.

A class action [lawsuit in Canada](#) claimed that both the Canadian and the province of Alberta governments used unfair and deceptive practices to enforce Covid vaccinations. It further alleges that millions of taxpayers dollars were used on coercive pro-vaccine campaigns to build a “relationship of trust” which resulted in severe permanent injuries in many who took the vaccines. The suit argues that governments provided false information, censored truthful data and violated informed consent. The lead counsel Jeffrey Rath, said that governments must be held accountable for their actions and the harm caused to vaccine recipients. Vaccine manufacturers did not guarantee the safety of their products because they were rushed to the market under emergency use authorization. The manufacturers demanded legal protection from lawsuits in case anyone was harmed by the vaccines. The lawsuits states that by withholding safety instructions the governments “interfered with the public’s ability to exercise their rights to informed consent to medical intervention.”

Indian government spokespersons also went into overdrive to promote the vaccine. The Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), [V G Somani had proclaimed that the Covid-19 vaccines were 110% safe](#) during the roll out of mass vaccination in unholy haste. Presently, not only a number of lawsuits for vaccine injuries are [filed in Indian courts](#), but Covishield, the vaccine which was administered to majority of Indians had to withdraw its product due to serious side effects like blood clots particularly in young people. Some political leaders also [questioned the government on continued Covishield jab](#) despite European nations banning it.

UHO recommends that government officials who promoted the vaccine in their zeal without firm evidence of safety and efficacy, should be held accountable. More importantly it was highly irresponsible for the DCGI, who is supposed to be the custodian of people’s safety to pronounce any vaccine as 110% safe an outlandish and unscientific statement by all accounts.

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