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RIGHT TO FREE SPEECH

CHR appeals FB takedown of pages of 3 militant groups

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MANILA, Philippines — The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) on Saturday urged Facebook (FB) to reconsider its decision to take down the pages of three Filipino activist groups, saying the move was “diminishing” their right to free speech.

In a statement, the CHR stressed the importance of maintaining a “delicate balance” between keeping the social media platform safe from hate speech and misinformation and upholding basic rights to expression and association. Facebook recently took down the pages of the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Bagong Alyansa Makabayan (Bayan), and Anakbayan.

Joma-related posts

The KMU, which reported the removal, said the personal accounts of its page’s administrators and editors were also locked down.

Echoing the observation of the shuttered groups, the CHR said the Facebook takedown apparently targeted posts about the recent passing of Jose Maria “Joma” Sison, the founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines, which is considered a terrorist organization by the government.

The social media network flagged the Sison-related posts for violating its community guidelines on “dangerous individuals and organizations.”

In making the appeal, the CHR said that while Facebook is a private business, the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGP) on Business and Human Rights calls upon companies to “avoid infringing on the human rights of others and ... address adverse human rights impacts with which they are involved.”

Businesses must also “avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities, and address such impacts when they occur,” the CHR said, citing UNGP provisions.

‘Nuanced approach’

“As such, we urge Facebook to review their decision to take down the pages of progressive groups based on their and human rights obligation to protect, respect and remedy,” the commission added.

A more “nuanced approach and appreciation” of the issue is necessary, it said, given the growing role of social media in shaping the state of human

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