

## Answer to Question

# What is Behind Facebook's Outage?

(Translated)

### Question:

On 14/10/2021, America held an international conference related to combating crime in the cyber field, with the participation of 30 countries, and neither Russia nor China were invited. Activity on Facebook stopped on Monday evening, 4/10/2021, when hundreds of millions of people around the world were suddenly unable to use Facebook and its subsidiaries, WhatsApp and Instagram, and the disruption lasted for about 6 hours. The next day, the US Senate held a hearing for a former Facebook employee... So, what's behind this? Is it a technical error or contrived? And if so, what is the truth? Furthermore, is there a connection between that and what is known that the tech group had supported Biden in the election against Trump?

### Answer:

In an accident that has not happened in 13 years, Facebook and its subsidiaries, WhatsApp and Messenger services stopped working for 6 hours on Monday, 10th October 2021, causing great disruption to Facebook first and the technology sector second. A review of what happened reveals the following:

First: This outage is the worst since 2008, when Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Messenger services went down for 3.5 billion users around the world, and this was accompanied by a record drop in the company's shares, to about 15%, nearly a collapse, and the shares of most technology companies declined significantly at different extents. The losses of technology tycoons dominated the global news, according to Al-Masry Al-Youm Newspaper, 10/5/2021, Zuckerberg, the largest shareholder in Facebook, lost about \$6 billion (and in some estimates 7) followed by Jeff Bezos, the owner of Amazon, with a loss of \$4.8 billion, then Larry Page and Sergey Brian - Google with a loss of more than 2 billion dollars each, then Steve Ballmer - Microsoft with a loss of 1.6 billion dollars, as well as the top tech rich people... And among the top ten rich people who lost the most, there was one wealthy Chinese man, Ma Huateng - Tencent Corporation with a loss of nearly a billion dollars, and the other nine were Americans. Thus, it is clear that the interruption of the services of Facebook and its subsidiaries, WhatsApp, Messenger and Instagram, was a severe blow to the entire American technology sector, and China was not affected by this, but rather it was the only country that survived this blow because it bans Facebook and its subsidiaries apps. On 5/10/2021, Sada Al-Balad quoted The Russian Network, RT, as saying: "The world was affected, while China tweeted separately from the rest of the world, because it had its own set of social media apps." What increases the seriousness and sensitivity of what happened is that the American technology sector is one of the largest sectors of the economy in America on the one hand, and on the other hand, it was the chief financier of the electoral campaign of Democratic President Biden and an opponent of former Republican President Trump, who was supported by the energy sector, especially oil companies in America. It may suggest the political dimensions of this major disruption that has massively and directly impacted Facebook and to a lesser extent other technology companies.

Second: By examining what happened, we find that Facebook was subjected to a major hack (sabotage), and at the same time other giant and American technology companies were subjected to sabotage in which success was not at a large scale as what happened in Facebook and its affiliates, and this act is either a cyberattack by some parties with electronic claws like Russia or China...or it is internal from the company itself as a message to the company's enemies that the company can harm them by stopping services even for a few hours...or it is a regular technical fault by an employee in the company...or out of revenge by Trump and his group because these companies were behind his fall in the elections and then Biden's victory... While the matter is still shrouded in some ambiguity, there are some news that indicate the reason, or suggest it as follows:

1- **As for Russia and China**, there are those who said that they are behind the external attack. The United States held a virtual summit of 30 countries to discuss a sub-topic of cyberattacks, which is "ransomware" (RT, 13/10/2021) and did not invite Russia to it. These programs cost American

companies nearly half a billion dollars in losses annually when hackers steal data from these companies and demand ransom in exchange for returning that data, provided that the payment is in cryptocurrency. Most of these attacks come from Russia, and America claimed that Russians were not invited to the meeting because it has dedicated a channel to address cybersecurity with Russia. Although the United States has actually accused Russia of being responsible for many cyberattacks over the past years or even months, the assumption that Russia or China is behind the attack on Facebook is considered unlikely and excluded in several ways:

a- The company itself excludes this possibility, [The New York Times reported that Facebook ruled out a cyberattack behind stopping its services with WhatsApp and Instagram. (Al Arabiya, 4/10/2021)]

b- On the other hand, Russia, which was accused of cyberattacks against American institutions at the end of the Trump era, undoubtedly became greatly afraid of any hacks or attacks on its part against America, because this issue is under discussion between the two parties before and after the summit between Presidents Biden and Putin on 16/6/2021, and that America is asking Russia to act against those who carry out cyberattacks from Russia against American interests, and on the other hand, US President Biden has been very strict in responding to cyberattacks, [US President Joe Biden warned that a significant cyberattack on the United States a real shooting war with a major power. (Russian Sputnik Agency, 7/28/2021)].

c- As for China, its hacking efforts are less than Russia's. [Microsoft said Russia accounted for most state-sponsored hacking detected by Microsoft over the past year, with a 58% share, mostly targeting government... Microsoft, in its second annual Digital Defense Report, which covers July 2020 through June 2021 said: "China, meanwhile, accounted for fewer than 1 in 10 of the state-backed hacking attempts Microsoft detected..." (Al-Arabiya 4/10/2021)].

**Thus, the assumption that Russia or China was behind the attack on Facebook remains weak.**

**2- As for that the company had a technical fault,** this possibility came from sources:

a- (Several Facebook employees who declined to be named have told Reuters they believed the outage was caused by an internal mistake in how internet traffic is routed to its systems. In a statement, Facebook believe that the Internet outage was caused by what is known as faulty configuration change, which affected the change of Facebook's routing from the Internet and pulled it from NVRAM, which in turn led to changing the write memory and running copies, and when it was redirected, nothing was the same anymore. (10/2021).

B- [Facebook apologized for the malfunction that occurred in all of its applications via the Internet, and Facebook revealed, at dawn today, Tuesday, the reasons that led to the interruption of the services of its platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. The company said in a statement that it believes that the main reason for the interruption of the communication service is "a wrong modification in the settings of the main routers that caused problems that led to the interruption of the communication service." (Al-Mayadeen, 5/10/2021)].

**But this is also a weak possibility and unlikely. It cannot be assumed that all of this is just a technical fault, for the following reasons:**

A- Technical faults are usually made by one person and not by several people at the same time, and it is unlikely that one person, regardless of his technical position in the company, is able to disrupt a company of the size of Facebook and all its branches Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram that have separate departments. This company employs 20 thousand employees working in security and safety tasks only via the Internet, not to mention the rest of the employees, thus to disconnect this giant company and its huge branches from the Internet, is impossible to be in the hands of one employee!

B- Moreover, this error was huge, complex and complicated, in addition to its being completely knocked offline and incurring losses amounting to 50 billion dollars from its market value, it [made its domain name "www.facebook.com" for sale possible by public auction on the Internet for some time... (Al-Jazeera Net, 6/10/2021)], and also, according to Alyaum Alsabie 10/5/2021, the New York Times confirmed that company employees would be unable to enter buildings and access the servers to resolve the issue. Also, Al-Masry Alyaum on 5/10/2021 quoted The New York Times reported that "Facebook have sent a small team to one of its data centers in California to manually reset the

servers."

**3- As for that the company has made this mistake deliberately** as a message addressed to those who try to harm it, there have been statements about that, including:

a- It was said that the fault occurred because Facebook had withdrawn the so-called "Border Gateway Protocol" or "BGP route". BGP is the route or map that data takes to reach the site, without which the user cannot reach. As an illustration with a simple example, the idea of the BGP protocol is similar to the idea of the GPS program that we use in our smart phones to know the best available path to where we are going in our cars or on foot. In short, Facebook and its affiliates, WhatsApp, Messenger and Instagram, disappeared from those maps and roads that connect each other, due to Facebook withdrawing the so-called Border Gateway Protocol.

B- It was also said that Facebook itself is behind the disruption of the platform and its products, and that Facebook wanted from this intended interruption that the company's engineers, during the downtime, conduct a comprehensive survey and cancel all the sensitive issues that former employee Frances Haugen spoke about in the company's leaks, for fear of what might result from the session that will be held by the US Congress to hear the testimony of the former employee regarding the psychological damages of the network...

**By considering these factors that Facebook itself is behind this deliberate disruption, I say it becomes clear that these factors are weak arguments:**

A- What happened caused the company to suffer large financial losses, and the capitalist companies focus on the financial gain and the commercial reputation in their work. Their values are purely material, and therefore it is unlikely that they will carry out internal self-sabotage that will cause them a huge loss and a bad reputation, unless the financial gain from that is greater and that reputation is compensated... and there is no evidence for that according to what happened, and all this makes the possibility of deliberate internal sabotage by the company or its employees unlikely...

B- As for the outage being deliberately caused by Facebook to cancel (all the sensitive issues that the former employee Frances Haugen spoke about in the company's leaks), the issue of hearing the testimony of the former Facebook employee in the Senate was scheduled before the outage, and its occurrence was on the day following the outage, i.e. on 5/10/2021 and the outage was on 4/10/2021, but this does not prevent the company from expecting leaks from the employee, especially since her speech in Congress was announced in advance. So, for the company to decide that outage a day before her testimony, as a precaution, this is possible, as one day before the Facebook service outage, she appeared on the American CBS TV screen in the famous 60 Minutes program, directing her arrows of anger to Facebook and its president, and her interview with the Senate a day after the outage, was with more severe attack. However, this does not make the company to deliberate the error to lose these huge sums behind it!

**4- As for what happened behind Trump and his group** as a matter of revenge for the company's standing with Biden against him in the elections, it was mentioned:

a- During the Trump administration, some major American technology companies were attacked by Trump for promoting fake news, and many welcomed the Democrats' victory in 2020. Silicon Valley technology companies were the biggest funders of Democratic President Biden's election campaign against former Republican President Trump who was backed by the energy sector, especially oil companies in America, may suggest the political dimensions of this major imbalance that afflicted Facebook...

b- There was a huge problem between the government and technology companies when Trump launched a trade war with China. Apple has been hit by the administration's tariffs on some of its consumer electronic products, which are sourced, assembled, and imported from China. Apple Chief Tim Cook has been forced to communicate with the White House, and even participate in several of the administration's task forces, as a way to monitor the damage Trump's trade policies can do to Apple.

c- As for the ex-employee Haugen's statements, she supports the Republican Party. To understand her reality, we mention the following observations:

\* After she left her job in Facebook, she began to focus her anger and criticism of the founder of the company, Mark Zuckerberg, which means that she rose to a difficult height, and this indicates that

someone was behind her... Then she sent those leaked documents to the Wall Street Journal, (before she left the company - Facebook - in May, Frances Haugen took internal company documents with her and sent them mainly to The Wall Street Journal. In an article published in mid-September, the daily newspaper revealed that based on this information, the company had been researching its Instagram network over three years to determine the effects it had on teenager users. The German Deutsche Welle, 4 October 2021) and this newspaper is conservative and pro-Republican, as stated in Al-Jazeera, October 28, 2007: [The Wall Street Journal is not only an economic newspaper, but also has political positions, it has a conservative orientation, it is very supportive of Israel, as it appears on her opinion page, and she supports the Republican Party and has a relationship with the neo-conservatives... (Al-Jazeera, 28/10/2007)]. As also stated in Wikipedia - German Section: (The Wall Street Journal is conservative and leaning towards the Republicans).

\* What also indicates the possible relationship of this issue to the Republican Party is that this employee was the director of the Civic Integrity Program at Facebook, a program aimed at curbing disinformation and other threats to election security. It is known that the 2020 presidential election was very tumultuous and there was great tension between the two parties. and it seems that the Republican Party and the Trump group were in contact with this employee while she was on duty to expose Facebook's hostility to the Republicans...

d- This official, Frances Haugen, said before the Senate on 5/10/2021 ["The company is pushing for more profits while not showing interest in the safety of users. She announced during the Congressional hearing: "Facebook withholds information and also misleads when inquiring about it." ... and that Mark Zuckerberg (the owner of Facebook) has unilateral control and is responsible for designing the algorithms ... 70% of Facebook employees feel that the company is unfair, and that Facebook cannot fix the flaw in dealing with children without interference from Congress. (Iram website 6/10/2021)].

**5- The summary of all of this suggests that Trump and his group were behind that hack (sabotage) in the Facebook company and its affiliates... as well as behind the focus on the evils of Facebook, especially the contents of its programs that harm children, adolescents and girls, which caused Facebook, especially its CEO, Zuckerberg, in great embarrassment... This has created a quasi-public opinion against Facebook and its pro-Democratic president as long as the matter is related to harming children, adolescents and girls, and it may also create embarrassment for Biden if he remains silent about taking measures against the company and its president, but it is not expected that the measures will be in depth, but rather as a method for appeasing the public opinion.**

6- In conclusion, these people, their violence among themselves is severe... And the values of the corrupt, unjust capitalists are based on personal benefit, even if they cause harm to others, even if they are their brothers or the people of their religion if they have a religion! **(وَكَذَلِكَ نُؤَلِّي بَعْضَ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضًا بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ) "And thus will We make some of the wrongdoers allies of others for what they used to earn."** [Al-An'am: 129] They are: **(كَمَنْ مَثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِنْهَا كَذَلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ) "like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom? Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing."** [Al-An'am: 122] It is a tragedy that these people control the world so they corrupt it and not reform it, because one cannot give what he does not have.

The righteousness of the world is with a people whom Allah loves and they love Him, who are under the banner of the Khilafah Rashidah (Rightly-Guided Caliphate)... Their values are the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger, they love good for their brothers as they love it for themselves.

**(أَدْلَّةٌ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ)**

**"humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic. That is the favor of Allah; He bestows it upon whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing."** [Al-Ma'ida: 54].

17<sup>th</sup> Rabii' I 1443 AH

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