

PRESS RELEASE

POLICE REPORTS FILED AGAINST NEW NARATIF FOR BREACH OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ACT

The Assistant Returning Officer has filed a police report against socio-political site New Naratif for publishing paid advertisements that amounted to the illegal conduct of election activity under s83(2) of the Parliamentary Elections Act (PEA) during the recent 2020 General Election.

2 The Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) had issued three notices to Facebook on 3 July, 7 July and 8 July 2020 to remove five unauthorised paid advertisements published on its platform by New Naratif. Under the PEA, the conduct of any election activity requires prior written authority signed by a candidate or his election agent. “Election activity” includes any activity which is done for the purpose of promoting or procuring the electoral success at any election for one or more identifiable political parties, candidates or groups of candidates; or prejudicing the electoral prospects of other political parties, candidates or groups of candidates at the election. Neither New Naratif nor its representatives or agents were authorised by any candidate or election agent in this General Election to conduct election activity.

3 After the first takedown was issued to Facebook on 3 July, the Elections Department had also released a media statement that New Naratif was deemed to be conducting election activity for placing paid Internet Election Advertising and that it had not been authorised to do so. The media statement, which was carried by various media outlets, had also reminded the public of the regulations. However, on 4 July, New Naratif publicised the takedown decision and continued to publish other paid advertisements.

4 Conducting election activity without authorisation by a candidate or his election agent from the start of the campaign period is an offence under Section 83(2) of the Parliamentary Elections Act. Any person convicted of such offence may be liable to a fine of up to \$2,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 12 months.

**ISSUED BY
ELECTIONS DEPARTMENT
PRIME MINISTER’S OFFICE
18 SEPTEMBER 2020**