

26 December 2023

Jeffrey J. Neuman  
Founder & CEO, JJJN Solutions, LLC

Re: Response Letter to Jeff Neuman re: TAG-Org

Dear Jeff,

I'm writing to respond to your series of letters regarding antisemitic statements made by Talal Abu Ghazaleh, founder and chairman of the Jordan-based organization, Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization (TAG-Org). I understand your requests for ICANN to take action to remove and relocate the instance of the L-root hosted by TAG-Org as well as making an unequivocal statement that ICANN does not condone hate speech and that it will not have any partnerships with those founders or leaders espouse such views.

I want to start by acknowledging the seriousness of the information you provided about the statements made by Talal Abu Ghazaleh. These comments are beyond offensive or objectionable. I apologize if you feel that by not providing a more direct response to you sooner that we are not treating this matter with the level of seriousness and attention it deserves. Please be assured that we are taking your concerns very seriously, and know that I have been in ongoing discussions with the Board about this issue since we received your letter. We want to make it absolutely clear that hate speech has no place in ICANN's multistakeholder process, and that Talal Abu Ghazaleh's statements violate ICANN's Expected Standards of Behavior. As expressed in ICANN's Expected Standards of Behavior, ICANN strives to create and maintain an environment in which people of many different backgrounds and cultures are treated with dignity, decency, and respect. It is through collaboration and respect that the multistakeholder process remains strong and allows ICANN to perform its critical technical coordination function.

Since receiving your original letter, we have been reviewing what actions and tools are available to us to deal with this inside of ICANN's policies and processes, so that our actions can have the maximum effectiveness. You pointed to the L-Root instances and we are aware and concerned that the perpetrator of the hate speech is also an ICANN community member, affiliated with a registrar, is involved in other activities, and has a role in other parts of ICANN.

We have been considering available options concerning Talal Abu Ghazaleh and TAG-Org and would like to share with you what steps we have already taken. We have reached out directly to inform Talal Abu Ghazaleh and TAG-Org that their hate speech violates ICANN's Expected Standards of Behavior. Accordingly, we have referred this matter to the Office of the Ombuds to investigate and make further recommendations.

Although your letters are specifically about TAG-Org, they also point to a larger question that has not yet been addressed by the ICANN community. Specifically what role, if any, should ICANN have in addressing egregious conduct that violates the Expected Standards of Behavior to the extent that it could cause significant reputational harm to ICANN and the multistakeholder

model if left unaddressed? This is an area for which there is currently no policy or community guidance. In its absence, it is difficult to know how to weigh potentially competing issues. For example, your letters reference free speech questions. This incident has made it clear that as a community we need to discuss this further in the coming weeks and months.

Thank you again for raising these concerns and please let me know if you have further questions. We will update you on the status of the Ombuds review as it progresses.

Sincerely,



Sally Costerton  
Interim President & CEO, ICANN