

Facebook censors anti-fascist and anarchist groups, falsely linking them with extreme-right violence

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In a significant escalation of political censorship on its platform, Facebook published an update on Wednesday to its “Dangerous Individuals and Organizations” policy that labels left-wing and anarchist organizations as violent and falsely amalgamates them with fascist militia groups and right-wing extremists associated with the QAnon conspiracy theory.

In a Newsroom blog post entitled, “An Update to How We Address Movements and Organizations Tied to Violence,” Facebook says that it is taking action against “Pages, Groups and Instagram accounts tied to offline anarchist groups that support violent acts amidst protests, US-based militia organizations and QAnon.”

While Facebook says it already removes “content calling for or advocating violence” and bans “organizations and individuals that proclaim a violent mission,” the blog post says that “we have seen growing movements that, while not directly organizing violence, have celebrated violent acts, shown that they have weapons and suggest they will use them, or have individual followers with patterns of violent behavior.”

That the expanded Facebook definition of “dangerous” people and groups is aimed at stifling speech on the social media platform—with 2.7 billion monthly active users worldwide—is shown by the fact that its policy now includes “organizations and movements that have demonstrated significant risks to public safety but do not meet the rigorous criteria to be designated as a dangerous organization and banned from having any presence on our platform.”

Facebook then outlines the actions it will take to suppress content from those it deems “dangerous” and “violent” but do not fit the “rigorous” definition of either description. These measures may include removal of accounts from Facebook and Instagram, limiting recommendations, reduced ranking in News Feed, reduced visibility in Search, removal from Related Hashtags on Instagram and prohibition from advertising and fundraising.

As Facebook is listing off the many techniques it utilizes to ban, delete and suppress content—which it refers to in corporate-speak as “remove, reduce and inform”—it becomes clear that these methods are being perfected in the service of political

censorship against oppositional, left-wing and socialist views that are increasing in popularity and pose a threat to the capitalist foundations of the social media giant. Facebook currently has a Wall Street value of \$762 billion and its CEO Mark Zuckerberg has accumulated a personal wealth of \$100 billion.

The Newsroom blog post goes on to say that Facebook has already removed “over 790 groups, 100 Pages and 1,500 ads tied to QAnon” and additionally “imposed restrictions on over 1,950 Groups and 440 Pages on Facebook and over 10,000 accounts on Instagram.” Lumping anarchists and left-wing groups in with the far right, Facebook says, “For militia organizations and those encouraging riots, including some who may identify as Antifa, we’ve initially removed over 980 groups, 520 Pages and 160 ads from Facebook. We’ve also restricted over 1,400 hashtags related to these groups and organizations on Instagram.”

Among the accounts of anti-fascist and left-wing activists that have been shut down in the present Facebook dragnet are the following:

- *It’s Going Down*: an anarchist news publishing platform that reports on social struggles and exposes the activities of white supremacist and neo-Nazi networks.

- CrimethInc.: a left-wing and anarchist publishing organization that identifies itself as an “international network of aspiring revolutionaries.”

- PNW Youth Liberation Front: a group that says it is “a decentralized network of autonomous youth collectives dedicated to direct action towards total liberation” and has been involved in the recent protests in Portland, Oregon.

There is no question that by including such groups in its list of “dangerous” and “violent” individuals and organizations, Facebook is supporting the drive by the US political establishment and the US Justice Department to equate opposition within the working class and among young people with the violence of alt-right, neo-Nazi and fascistic militia individuals and groups.

The recent history of ideologically motivated violence in the US exposes Facebook’s false identification of these groups

with the extreme right. According to a report by Natasha Lennard in the *Intercept*, “It bears repeating, ad nauseam, that the far right has carried out 329 murders in the last three decades; none have been attributed to antifa. Between 2009 and 2018, white supremacist and far-right extremists were responsible for 73 percent of extremist murders in the U.S. And that’s not even to mention the state-sanctioned, racist killings carried out by the police.”

The effort to label the left as violent has also intensified over the past three months during the nationwide and global mass protests against police violence and repression that were sparked by the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police on Memorial Day. Both the Democrats and Republicans along with the corporate media have slandered these demonstrations as “violent” and “riots” and, as Trump has stated numerous times, part of the “radical left” and “anarchist” takeover of American cities that must be put down with “law and order.”

In June, at the height of the George Floyd protests, Attorney General William Barr created a task force dedicated to counter “anti-government extremists” who engage in “indefensible acts of violence designed to undermine public order.” In his directive to all Justice Department law enforcement representatives, Barr wrote, “Among other lawless conduct, these extremists have violently attacked police officers and other government officials, destroyed public and private property, and threatened innocent people.”

Furthermore, Barr’s memo said that the “acts of violence” came from extremists “of all persuasions” including the extreme right-wing Boogaloo militia advocates who have engaged in murder and other criminal acts along with “those who identify as Antifa” on the left.

Meanwhile, Senator Ted Cruz (Republican, Texas) chaired a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on August 4 where he claimed, “Across the country, we’re seeing horrific violence, we’re seeing our country torn apart. Violent anarchists and Marxists are exploiting protests to transform them into riots and direct assaults on the lives and safety of their fellow Americans.”

This position is not unique to Barr, Trump and the Republican Party. On the fifth night of the George Floyd protests in cities across the US that have been devastated by decades of attacks on living standards and social programs, the future Democratic Party nominee for President in the 2020 elections, Joseph Biden, denounced protesters for “burning down communities” and carrying out “needless destruction.”

While police and federal agents were beating protesters and National Guard troops were being called up and mobilized against peaceful demonstrations, Biden blamed the public for the decay in the cities, saying, “Violence that guts and shuts businesses that serve the community” is not “the American response.” In late July, Biden reiterated his stance, calling for the prosecution of “arsonists and anarchists.”

These same sentiments have been expressed by

Representative James Clyburn (Democrat, South Carolina) and Democratic Mayor of Chicago Lori Lightfoot who, according to the *New York Times*, after police assaulted protestors calling for an end to police violence, said, “To those who engaged in this criminal behavior, let’s be clear: We are coming for you.”

The purpose and results of the recent closed-door meetings between the Silicon Valley tech monopolies and the White House in the preparations for the US presidential election in November are becoming obvious. As reported by the WSWS, representatives of nine major tech firms—including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Reddit—met with US government law enforcement and national intelligence agencies on August 12 to discuss “election security” with little or no information reported to the public following the online gathering.

The endless references by Facebook and the others to those who identify as antifa as “violent” and “dangerous” are proof of the completely reactionary character of the effort to amalgamate left-wing and anarchist groups with far-right extremists who have actually committed acts of violence and killed people while proclaiming support for the Trump administration.

A Google search of antifa will only yield a Wikipedia entry for the name. There is no official website for an organization with this name in the US, Europe or anywhere else in the world. While there are clearly individuals who identify with the message of “anti-fascism,” the claim that an organization called “Antifa” is coordinating acts of extreme violence against the US government is entirely fabricated.

Instead, what the ruling establishment—of which the social media monopolies are a critical element—fears more than anything is that masses of workers and young people will break free from the two-party political system and begin to organize independently of the entire capitalist political setup on the basis of the fight for socialism. The ever-expanding scope of political censorship on social media and on the internet more broadly is certain grow in the weeks leading up to the November 3 election and in its aftermath as the US ruling class seeks to suppress all signs of opposition.



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