

Facebook overturns deletion of SGP anti-war video after widespread protest

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After thousands of people protested on social media for a week against Facebook's deletion of an anti-war video by the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP), the tech company has restored the video. This marks an important success, but it also raises fundamental political questions.

Facebook deleted the video titled "No Third World War! Against the Ukraine war, NATO aggression and German rearmament!" on Saturday, March 26, without giving any reason and without the possibility of appeal. The SGP also received no response to its request to restore the video immediately and to respect the party's constitutional rights.

The deletion was undoubtedly an act of political censorship. The video contained no hate speech, did not violate any law, and did not breach any community policy. It was removed for purely political reasons in order to silence those who oppose the deafening war propaganda and the danger of a nuclear world war. The video unequivocally condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine but also shows how it was provoked by the countless wars of the NATO powers and the military encirclement of Russia.

Above all, the video explains the program of international socialism, which provides the only way to end the war and prevent a catastrophe. If the international working class does not intervene independently and build an international movement against war and capitalism, a world war is inevitable.

After the video had been viewed over 20,000 times within a few days, Facebook decided to block it. The aim was to suppress the SGP's independent anti-war policy and intimidate the broad popular opposition to war.

It took over a week for Facebook to restore the video and with it the close to 100 comments and almost 200

responses it generated. This decision was undoubtedly a reaction to the massive support that the SGP received.

A single post by the SGP on Facebook alone, which opposed the censorship of the video, was shared 81 times and supported over 400 times with a thumbs up. The three central hashtags of the campaign #SpeakOutAgainstWW3, #StopCensoringSocialism and #defendSGP were together used over 1,500 times. A repost of the video and its publication on other platforms reached almost 20,000 views combined.

In addition, the WSWs received numerous statements from workers and young people from Germany and around the world who protested in the strongest possible terms against Facebook's censorship.

"Facebook has taken the side of death and destruction through its censorship. This is a criminal act and must be combated vigorously! No to war, No to censorship," a reader from the UK said.

A software developer called on Facebook colleagues to form independent rank-and-file committees to fight against censorship and warmongering by the corporation.

"The censorship of the video is an attack on the broad anti-war sentiment in the population. The high number of views the video had before it was deleted underlines the broad interest among the population in a perspective on the fight against war and a real analysis of the causes of war," said a student from Baden-Württemberg.

But even if Facebook could not maintain the censorship in the face of this protest, it had a significant impact. First of all, the damage remains that the video was blocked at the peak of its popularity when it was being widely shared, and thus the wave of distribution was stopped.

Above all, however, the incident underscores that

Facebook assumes the right to arbitrarily censor unwelcome facts and opinions that the company does not share. In doing so, the company has clearly violated applicable law. Most recently, in July last year, Germany's Federal Court of Justice ruled that Facebook must give due consideration to fundamental rights when deleting content, inform the users concerned and give them the opportunity to appeal.

Facebook was aware that the SGP video did not violate any laws or community guidelines and was therefore unable to comply with these requirements. However, it still censored the video and simply disregarded any jurisprudence.

It must be assumed that the tech giant acted in close cooperation with the government. Facebook has hired more than 20,000 employees for its security and enforcement team to monitor and censor the posts on its platform. Many of them are "former intelligence and law enforcement officials," admitted Monica Bickert, Head of Counter-Terrorism at Facebook, in January 2018.

In Germany, more than 1,000 people are employed to monitor the content on Facebook. Cooperation with the government is particularly close. With the Network Enforcement Act, the state not only encourages the censorship of tech companies, but also encourages Facebook to delete as much content as possible by threatening the company with high fines. According to the Transparency Report, 11,699 posts were deleted from Facebook in Germany on this basis in the first half of 2021 alone, which represents a nine-fold increase compared to the previous half-year.

Facebook must explain how the Socialist Equality Party got into this censorship machine. Which persons were involved in the decision to carry out the deletion without providing any reason and without the possibility of appeal? What role did government agencies play in Facebook's decision?

If Facebook does not answer these questions, it will not be possible to ensure that they will refrain from further arbitrary and politically motivated censorship measures in the future. We therefore call on all our readers and supporters to continue to protest against the censorship and to demand answers to these questions from Facebook. In addition, the SGP and WSWS are fighting alongside all opponents of war whose content is still censored on Facebook and other social media

platforms.



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