

Facebook cuts 'uprising' page after Israel protest

March 29 2011, By ARON HELLER , Associated Press



In this photo made available Tuesday March 29, 2011 by Israeli Minister of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs shows a Facebook page calling on Palestinians to take up arms against Israel. Facebook removed the page on Tuesday following a high-profile Israeli appeal. The page, titled "Third Palestinian Intifada," had more than 350,000 fans before it was taken down. It called on Palestinians to take to the streets after Friday prayers on May 15 and to begin an uprising. "Judgment Day will be brought upon us only once the Muslims have killed all of the Jews," a quote from the page reads. (AP Photo/Israeli Minister of Public Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs) NO SALES

(AP) -- Facebook on Tuesday removed a page calling on Palestinians to take up arms against Israel, following a high-profile Israeli appeal to the popular social-networking site.

The affair highlighted how Facebook is increasingly involved in charged political conflicts, balancing between protecting freedom of expression and defending against hate speech.

The page, titled "Third Palestinian Intifada," had more than 350,000 fans when it was taken down. It called on Palestinians to take to the streets after Friday prayers on May 15 and begin an uprising. "Judgment Day will be brought upon us only once the Muslims have killed all of the Jews," a quote from the page read.

Facebook said the page began as a call for peaceful protest, even though it used the term "intifada," which it said has been associated with violence in the past.

"However, after the publicity of the page, more comments deteriorated to direct calls for violence," said Andrew Noyes, Facebook's public policy communications manager. He said the creators of the page eventually made calls for violence as well.

"We monitor pages that are reported to us, and when they degrade to direct calls for violence or expressions of hate - as occurred in this case - we have and will continue to take them down."

Facebook added that it typically does not take down content that speaks out against countries, religions, political entities, or ideas.

With the "Facebook Revolutions" helping to bring down regimes in Egypt and Tunisia, the social networking site has become an agent of change and a powerful political tool that finds itself asked to make rulings on the content posted by its millions of users worldwide.

Jerome Barron, a law professor and First Amendment expert at George Washington University, said that as a private concern, Facebook does

not fall under the guidelines of U.S. freedom of expression legislation and is free to decide on its own policies.

Barron noted arguments that companies like Google and Facebook were growing so powerful that they should be regulated by the freedom of expression guidelines.

In a letter last week to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, Israeli Cabinet Minister Yuli Edelstein said the page included "wild incitement," with calls to kill Jews and of "liberating" Jerusalem through violence.

Edelstein applauded Facebook for removing the page, saying he hoped the action would be an example to others and deter similar postings in the future.

"I asked Mr. Zuckerberg that the red lines of freedom of expression and incitement and violence should not be crossed," he said. "I welcome that decision even though I am sure that more cat-and-mouse games await us and there will be attempts by our enemies and those who hate us to enter Facebook in other ways."

The original page featured a fist in the colors of the Palestinian flag and images of dead Palestinian children. Since its removal, several other pages with of the same name have been created - each attracting only a few hundred "likes" apiece.

Facebook's content regulations prohibit posting material that contains or promotes "hateful or violent content directed at an individual or group" - including those based on national origin or religious affiliation.

It has previously removed pages deemed to violate their policies - ranging from Holocaust deniers, anti-gay bullying groups and even

people using fake names.

Jewish advocacy groups launched a counter page, encouraging users to report "Third Palestinian Intifada" for its hateful content and demand that Facebook remove it.

Initially, Facebook seemed hesitant to do so, citing its support for freedom of expression.

The Anti-Defamation League, a U.S.-based Jewish advocacy group, lauded Facebook's eventual decision.

"By taking this action, Facebook has now recognized an important standard to be applied when evaluating issues of noncompliance with its terms of service involving distinctions between incitement to violence and legitimate calls for collective expressions of opinion and action," the ADL said in a statement.

©2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Facebook cuts 'uprising' page after Israel protest (2011, March 29) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-facebook-uprising-page-israel-protest.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--