

# Facebook revamps guidelines after rape protests (Update)

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The 'Facebook' logo is reflected in a young woman's sunglasses as she browses the Internet in Bangalore, on May 15, 2012. Facebook has announced it is updating its policies on "harmful and hateful" content after a campaign complaining it was allowing jokes and other offensive comments about rape and domestic abuse.

A top Facebook executive said Wednesday that authors of misogynist posts on the social network will now have to "put your name on your

sexism" instead of being anonymous.

"Pages on Facebook are allowed to be anonymous, and that is really important; people start revolutions," Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg said Wednesday during an on-stage chat at an AllThingsD conference in California.

"But with these kinds of crude humor against women or any other group, we are not letting those pages be anonymous anymore."

Facebook announced on Tuesday it was updating its policies on "harmful and hateful" content after a campaign complaining it was allowing jokes and other offensive comments about rape and domestic abuse.

Facebook vice president of global public policy Marne Levine said the social network would "complete our review and update the guidelines" around hate speech and seek comments from legal experts, women's organizations and other groups "that have historically faced discrimination."

"In recent days, it has become clear that our systems to identify and remove hate speech have failed to work as effectively as we would like, particularly around issues of gender-based hate," Levine said in an online statement.

"In some cases, content is not being removed as quickly as we want. In other cases, content that should be removed has not been or has been evaluated using outdated criteria... We need to do better—and we will."

Facebook announced the change after a campaign organized by the activist group Women, Action & The Media, which claimed the social network "has long allowed content endorsing violence against women."

"They claim that these pages fall under the 'humor' part of their guidelines, or are expressions of 'free speech,'" the group said in launching the campaign.

After the Facebook announcement, the organization hailed the action.

"We are reaching an international tipping point in attitudes towards rape and violence against women," said Jaclyn Friedman, executive director of the group.

"We hope that this effort stands as a testament to the power of collaborative action."

Sandberg maintained that Facebook, like other websites featuring content uploaded by users, grapples with the tension between freedom of expression and being a stage for offensive material.

Most, if not all, of the posts targeted for protest by women's groups has been removed, according to Sandberg.

"There is a bunch of stuff that stays up, because it is not hate and not inciting violence, it is just distasteful and inappropriate and awful stuff that we don't stand behind," Sandberg said.

"We are reviewing them and saying if you want to leave this up, then put your name on it," she continued.

Sandberg said a "huge percentage" of posters opted to take down the content instead of taking credit for it at the online community.

In cases where posters lay claim to content, "the dialogue is real" and aimed at those responsible, according to the executive.

"That is a really important step," said Sandberg, author of a recently released book "Lean In" about women's career struggles. "Put your name on your sexism."

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