

YouTube star PewDiePie dumped over anti-Semitic videos (Update)

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YouTube's most watched blogger PewDiePie will lose his preferred status on the Google-owned video service after posting several videos containing anti-Semitic remarks and Nazi references, the tech firm said Tuesday.

YouTube said it was canceling a popular program from the 27-year-old Swede, whose real name is Felix Kjellberg, the same day Disney said it was cutting its ties with the social media star.

PewDiePie—known for posting humorous clips to his more than 53 million followers on YouTube—will be sanctioned for violating the platform's guidelines on hate speech, Google said Tuesday.

"We've decided to cancel the release of 'Scare PewDiePie Season 2' and we're removing the PewDiePie channel from Google Preferred," a statement from the US tech giant said.

"Scare PewDiePie" was program that YouTube ordered for its online subscription service.

Google Preferred is a program that allows advertisers to direct their messages to the key 18- to 34-year-old demographic, with an implicit guarantee that the participation won't hurt their brand.

The moves won't keep PewDiePie off YouTube but will likely limit his audience and could sharply curtail his revenue from advertising.

Separately Disney indicated it was ending its business relationship with the Swedish media star.

"Although Felix has created a following by being provocative and irreverent, he clearly went too far in this case and the resulting videos are inappropriate," according to a statement to AFP by Disney's Maker Studios.

PewDiePie, who had editorial independence under the terms of the arrangement with Disney, reportedly paid two Indian men five dollars to hold the banner reading "Death to all Jews" while they laugh and dance in the January 11 video.

"I was trying to show how crazy the modern world is, specifically some of the services available online," Kjellberg said in a Tumblr blog post on February 12.

"I picked something that seemed absurd to me—that people on Fiverr would say anything for 5 dollars," referring to a website that helps freelancers receive part-time work.

The Wall Street Journal reported PewDiePie had posted nine videos that display anti-Semitic jokes and Nazi references since August.

One of them shows a man dressed as Jesus Christ, saying "Hitler did absolutely nothing wrong."

"I think it's important to say something and I want to make one thing clear: I am in no way supporting any kind of hateful attitudes," the YouTube star said in the blog post.

Kjellberg is a top earner on YouTube, making roughly \$14.5 million (13.6 million euros) last year, according to reported estimates from

social media data firm NeoReach.

That amount includes splitting ad revenue with YouTube, as well as sponsorships and appearance fees.

In December, PewDiePie accused YouTube of trying to "kill" his channel and has threatened to shut it down, a move that turned out to be a publicity stunt.

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