

Facebook blocks manipulation efforts in Britain, Romania

March 7 2019



Facebook said it took down accounts from users concealing their identities and seeking to influence political discourse in Britain and Romania

Facebook said it blocked online manipulation efforts in Britain and Romania from faked accounts in the latest crackdown on "inauthentic"

content on the huge social network.

Facebook said in a statement the separate operations in the two countries misrepresented the identities of the users and sought to spread hate speech and divisive comments.

"We're taking down these pages and accounts based on their behavior, not the content they posted," Facebook cybersecurity policy chief Nathaniel Gleicher said in a statement.

"In each of these cases, the people behind this activity coordinated with one another and used fake accounts to misrepresent themselves, and that was the basis for our action."

Gleicher added that "we didn't find any links between these sets of activities, but they used similar tactics by creating networks of accounts to mislead others about who they were and what they were doing."

The move is the latest by Facebook to crack down on efforts to manipulate [public sentiment](#) in the US and elsewhere, with prior actions concentrating on accounts in Russia and Iran.

In Britain, Facebook removed 137 Facebook and Instagram accounts purporting to be "far-right and anti-far-right activists," which frequently changed names and "operated fake accounts to engage in [hate speech](#) and spread divisive comments on both sides of the political debate in the UK," Gleicher said.

"Despite their misrepresentation of their identities, we found that these pages, groups and accounts were connected. They frequently posted about local and [political news](#) including topics like immigration, [free speech](#), racism, LGBT issues, far-right politics, issues between India and Pakistan, and [religious beliefs](#) including Islam and Christianity."

Gleicher said the action stemmed from an internal investigation aided by British law enforcement and that Facebook has shared its findings with authorities.

Separately, Facebook took down 31 accounts in Romania which posted about [local news](#) and political issues, "including partisan news under fictitious bylines in support of the Social Democratic Party (PSD)," according to Gleicher

He said that while the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, "our manual review found that some of this activity was linked to an individual associated with the PSD."

The move comes a day after Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg said he sees the social network shifting to private messaging to meet demands for users for a "digital living room" rather than a digital "town square."

© 2019 AFP

Citation: Facebook blocks manipulation efforts in Britain, Romania (2019, March 7) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-03-facebook-blocks-efforts-britain-romania.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>
--