

A former White House security chief is deleting Facebook pages that criticize government

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[Former](#) White House cybersecurity director Nathaniel Gleicher has overseen the censorship of hundreds of Facebook pages. An

array of these [pages criticise](#) governments and ‘the establishment’.

Gleicher, now head of cybersecurity at Facebook, has apparently participated in the [removal](#) of 599 political pages and 251 accounts – allegedly because they:

post clickbait posts on these Pages to drive people to websites that are entirely separate from Facebook and seem legitimate, but are actually ad farms.

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In what looks like a coordinated move, Twitter joined Facebook in [censoring](#) some of the biggest pages.

Deleting accounts on a whim?

After initially speaking to *The Canary*, Facebook has since been ignoring calls, emails and voicemails. The social-media multinational failed to offer any reason for deleting a number of political pages that do not seem to be “inauthentic”. And the tech giant did not appear to give any of the pages due process, such as a warning, before removing their internet platform.

Reverb Press, for example, [provides](#) links to reputable sources in its articles. And media-ranking website *Media Bias/Fact Check*, which academic [Dave Van Zandt](#) runs, [ranks](#) *Reverb Press*’s reporting as ‘highly factual’. So Facebook seems to have had no legitimate reason for [removing](#) the page.

The only rationale Facebook offers for deleting hundreds of diverse pages is a sweeping article in its '[Newsroom](#)'. Gleicher, who [was](#) on Barack Obama's National Security Council from 2013 to 2015, [claimed](#) his cybersecurity team look at behaviour rather than content:

the "news" stories or opinions these accounts and Pages share are often indistinguishable from legitimate political debate. This is why it's so important we look at these actors' *behavior* – such as whether they're using fake accounts or repeatedly posting spam – rather than their *content* when deciding which of these accounts, Pages or Groups to remove.

In the statement, Gleicher also [said](#) that the pages can use "fake accounts" to "artificially inflate" engagement for their pages, and that such behaviour "violates our policies against spam".

"An excuse for censorship"?

Other pages whose removals Facebook refused to explain include [Cop Block](#) and the journalism page of *RT* reporter [Rachel Blevins](#). *Cop Block*, which had [1.7m](#) Facebook followers, films police brutality and police have [arrested](#) members of the organisation for their civil disobedience. Facebook also [removed](#) many other pages documenting police brutality, with millions of collective followers.

Blevins, who had [70,000](#) followers, is a reporter for the Russian state-owned media site *RT*. She [focuses](#) on stories that the "traditional media" is ignoring.

And *Reverb Press* appears to be legitimate site. The outlet [describes](#) itself as “proudly progressive”. Editor-in-chief Edward Lynn told the [Guardian](#):

We are a legitimate news publisher. We are not fake news. We are not misinformation. We are not foreign. We are simply a small independent news publication trying to grow.

Lynn [continued](#):

Go read any social media expert’s advice and they all say to share on more than one page or platform. That’s the social media playbook. It’s a standard practice, and it’s being used as an excuse for censorship.

Deleting accounts at the direction of governments?

It’s not just that a former White House cybersecurity chief seems to be running the Facebook show on this matter. Governments have also been directing the tech giant to delete pages and accounts.

Facebook has previously [removed](#) accounts with four million followers because they’ve been added to arbitrary US sanction lists. What makes this worse is that the criteria for adding someone to a US sanction list is so [vague](#) that even Jeremy Corbyn could potentially be added to one. That means Donald Trump’s administration could have anyone it fancies thrown off social media.

Then there’s Israel’s government. Israeli officials have publicly [boasted](#) about how willingly Facebook removes pro-Palestinian content they deemed to be “incitement”:

Shortly after news broke earlier this month of the agreement between the Israeli government and Facebook, Israeli Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked said Tel Aviv had submitted 158 requests to the social media giant over the previous four months asking it to remove content it deemed “incitement.” She said Facebook had granted 95 percent of the requests.

But unfortunately, it doesn’t look like the mainstream media is that bothered about internet censorship, as long as it benefits them by weakening independent media.

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