

Senate Select Committee on Foreign Interference Through Social Media Questions on Notice - Twitter Responses

From transcript:

Question 1: I understand it was previously the policy of Twitter not to amplify these accounts who allowed them to be on the policy of Twitter not to amplify these accounts who allowed them to be on other platform, but viral with the algorithm. Am I right on these accounts so an Iranian official who it previously wouldn't have been able to go viral on the now can? We have made a number of changes to how the product actually works in terms of the algorithm. You may have seen the For You tab and the Following tab. Part of this reflects a broader commitment at the community to give you more choice and control over the content they are seeing so in some cases depending on the actions we take the accounts will have their amplification limited. But again, that is looking much more policy violations and the attribution of the account itself. So you have made a policy choice to allow amplification of government officials, those associated with authoritarian regimes that you previously didn't allow? I wasn't talking about state media but talk about the Ayatollah Khomeini, who now goes viral on the platform.

Answer: Government labels, which historically had been applied to a range of Governments, did not limit amplification in isolation. Our new enforcement approach,¹ Freedom of Speech Not Reach, will allow us to restrict the visibility of tweets that violate our rules, in addition to potentially removing the most serious violations. Tweets posted by Government accounts are subject to these same remediations.

Question 2: One of the witnesses before the enquiry, Ms Vicki Hsu, has become a regular target of a transnational campaign by the Chinese Communist Party, including on your platform, but other platforms as well. There are many accounts that are created to harass her for her research on Xinjiang, but also other aspects of the work. Are you still on top of this and making sure that content doesn't revive the platform?

Answer: We are deeply concerned by the trend, on and offline, of transnational oppression and we continue to take action on accounts that violate our rules, including those targeting Ms Xu.

Question 3: I want to get a sense of what you see as the scale of CIB activity that might breach Australians on your platform. I have your most recent transparency report under our Australian code. It doesn't - it talks about how you do things and your community notes approach but doesn't give examples or numbers on, say, CIB activities that you've disrupted and examples in terms of how they might have breached or impacted Australians. Is that something that you can give us a bit more information now on for the hearing so that the question really is, can you tell the committee what CIB disruptions has occurred, what are some of the top examples that might have reached Australians on your platform and some of the numbers?

Answer: For the first half of 2023, Twitter actioned approximately 30 million accounts globally for violations of our Platform manipulation and spam policy. From November 2022 until July 2023 the company actioned approximately 6600 accounts for violations of the same policy

¹https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2023/freedom-of-speech-not-reach-an-update-on-our-enforcement-philosophy

specifically targeting Australian conversations that may potentially be attributable to overseas actors.

Question 4: Has any government, foreign or local, made any request to Twitter to censor or remove content in relation to the Voice Referendum? If you could take notice how many requests have made and which government was making them that would be much appreciated, thank you.

Answer: Twitter received 17 content removal requests from the Australian Electoral Commission, identified as potentially related to the Voice Referendum over the last approximately 3 month period.

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