



Praise Of Ukrainian Neo-Nazi Battalion Given Green Light By Facebook: Intercept

Description

UKRAINE: Facebook is now allowing its billions of users to praise a Ukrainian neo-Nazi military unit called the Azov Battalion, after the social media giant previously banned the group from free discussion under the company's Dangerous Individuals and Organizations policy, [The Intercept's](#) Sam Biddle reports.



When I say “temporarily,” I should have said “indefinitely”—there’s no expiration date for this policy change. FB spokesperson told me “For the time being”

— Sam Biddle (@samfbiddle) [February 24, 2022](#)

According to Biddle, the Azov regiment – which functions as an armed wing of the broader Ukrainian white nationalist Azov movement – is classified as a “Tier 1” dangerous organization under FB policy, alongside the likes of ISIS and the KKK. It began as a volunteer anti-Russia militia

before **officially joining the Ukrainian National Guard in 2014**, and is known for its hardcore ultranationalist views and neo-Nazi ideology.

The group was formally banned by Facebook in 2019, and designated (along with several individuals) under the company's prohibition against hate groups – subject to their harshest “Tier 1” restrictions that ban users from “praise, support, or representation” of blacklisted groups across all company-owned platforms.



Members of the Ukrainian National Guard's Azov Battalion train at their base in Urzuf, Ukraine. Brendan Hoffman for USA TODAY

According to Biddle:

*Though it has in recent years downplayed its neo-Nazi [sympathies](#), [the group's affinities](#) are not subtle: **Azov soldiers march and train wearing uniforms bearing icons of the Third Reich**; its [leadership](#) has reportedly [courted American alt-right and neo-Nazi elements](#) ; and in 2010, the battalion's first commander and a former Ukrainian parliamentarian, Andriy Biletsky, [stated](#) that Ukraine's national purpose was to “lead the white races of the world in a final crusade ... against Semite-led Untermenschen [subhumans].” With Russian forces reportedly moving rapidly against targets throughout Ukraine, Facebook's blunt, list-based approach to moderation puts the company in a bind: **What happens when a group you've deemed too dangerous to freely discuss is defending its country against a full-scale assault?** -The Intercept*

According to Facebook's new internal policy reviewed by *The Intercept*, the company will “allow praise of the Azov Battalion when explicitly and exclusively praising their role in defending Ukraine OR their role as part of the Ukraine's National Guard.”

Examples of allowed speech include: “Azov movement volunteers are real heroes, they are a much needed support to our national guard,” and “We are under attack. Azov has been courageously defending our town for the last 6 hours,” and “I think Azov is playing a patriotic role during this crisis.”

That said, the group still can’t use Facebook for recruiting purposes or publishing its own statements. The regiment’s uniforms and banners will continue to be banned as hate symbol imagery.

Examples of speech regarding the group that’s *not* allowed, includes things like: “Goebbels, the Fuhrer and Azov, all are great models for national sacrifices and heroism,” and “Well done Azov for protecting Ukraine and it’s white nationalist heritage.”

Facebook confirmed the decision, but refused to elaborate.

Other “Tier 1” groups include the Islamic State and the Ku Klux Klan.

by Tyler Durden

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