



White House urges Spotify to take further action on Joe Rogan: 'More can be done'

Description

USA: White House press secretary [Jen Psaki](#) called on music and podcast streaming giant Spotify to do "more" in the fight against Covid-19 misinformation on Tuesday.

At her daily press briefing, President [Joe Biden](#)'s top spokeswoman was asked about a decision by the company to add disclaimers linking to Covid-19 information hubs to any piece of content that includes discussion of the pandemic, vaccines, or Covid-19 itself. She responded that the change was a good step, but that the company could take steps (if it wanted) to actively prohibit content that contained misinformation that experts have warned is prolonging the pandemic and leading to more deaths.

Ms Psaki said that it was the responsibility of all companies and particularly that of those platforms where Americans get their news to "be responsible and be vigilant to ensure the American people have accurate information about something as significant as Covid-19. That certainly includes Spotify."

"Ultimately our view is that it's a good step, it's a positive step, but there's more that can be done," said the press secretary.

Her comments come as two musical artists with massive followings, [Neil Young](#) and [Joni Mitchell](#), decided to remove their music from the company's streaming service in protest over podcast host [Joe Rogan](#)'s espousal of misinformation about the Covid-19 pandemic and vaccines. Among other false statements, the widely-popular host has suggested that younger Americans are not at risk from the virus and do not need to receive a vaccine.

In reality, the virus does affect younger Americans (particularly those with complicating preexisting health issues) and also prevents the spread of the virus to those who are more vulnerable to the

disease's more dangerous symptoms.

Other artists who have also left the platform include Graham Nash, India.Arie and Nils Lofgren.

Meanwhile, no new episodes of Mr Rogan's podcast have appeared on Spotify in the past few days. Friday 28 January, Tuesday 1 February, and Wednesday 2 February have passed with no new episodes uploaded.

By Wednesday *The Independent* had twice contacted Spotify for comment regarding the apparent lack of new content from one of their biggest and most controversial stars.

Mr Rogan has faced a whirlwind of criticism from those on the left for a bevy of recent incidents including an interview with Dr [Jordan Peterson](#), a Canadian psychologist, in which Dr Peterson said that Michael Eric Dyson, an African-American professor at Vanderbilt University's Divinity School, is "brown, not Black".

After several days of escalating backlash, Spotify published a blog post announcing the implementation of a Covid-19 disclaimer on videos about the pandemic in a move that did little to quell the growing frustration many on the left have with the disinformation and sometimes offensive views in Mr Rogan's shows.

"This new effort to combat misinformation will roll out to countries around the world in the coming days. To our knowledge, this content advisory is the first of its kind by a major podcast platform," claimed the company's co-founder, Daniel Ek.

"I want you to know that from the very first days of the pandemic, Spotify has been biased toward action," added Mr Ek.

The Biden administration has taken a strong stance against Covid-19 misinformation, which Surgeon General Vivek Murthy said last year was contributing to more deaths and more Covid-19 cases especially in communities where vaccine mistrust remains high.

Former President [Donald Trump](#)'s White House, by comparison, was often the source of conflicting messaging on the topic as public health officials like Dr [Anthony Fauci](#) and Dr [Deborah Birx](#) urged Americans to guard against the virus while White House staff including Mr Trump himself often publicly flouted Covid-19 guidelines at events around the country.

Social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have faced similar pressure from both the administration and activists to contribute to similar efforts aimed at tamping down on misinformation on their respective services.

by John Bowden

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