

Google shuts down YouTube channels in expansion of state-directed online censorship

By Kevin Reed
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In a further expansion of state-directed Internet censorship, Google announced Thursday that it had deleted 58 accounts from its social media platforms YouTube, Blogger and Google+. The technology monopoly claimed, without meaningful substantiation, that the accounts it removed were part of a worldwide effort by “bad actors,” “influence operations” and “state-sponsored hacking” linked with the Iranian government.

In a safety and security blog post, Google executive Kent Walker wrote that 39 YouTube channels, 6 blogs on Blogger and 13 Google+ accounts were identified and removed due to their supposed connection with Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), the primary Iranian media organization with close ties to the country’s Supreme Leader.

Walker provided no detailed facts supporting the claims of Iranian influenced social media activity. Instead, he wrote: “We can’t go into all the technical details without giving away information that would be helpful to others seeking to abuse our platforms ...”

Much of the information used by Google as the basis of its assertion that the Iranian government was behind the accounts was provided by FireEye, a cyber-security firm managed by former military intelligence officers with close ties to Wall Street and the US State Department.

On August 21, FireEye released a report that has been used to bolster a series of censorship moves, first by Facebook and Twitter and now Google, over the past week. The title of the report, “Suspected Iranian Influence Operation,” shows that the new campaign against “coordinated inauthentic activity” is following the pattern of the previous “Russian meddling” and “fake news” initiatives.

Notably, FireEye said that it had only “moderate

confidence that this activity originates from Iranian actors.” The company added that the possibility exists that “the activity could originate from elsewhere” or includes “authentic online behavior.”

As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained on Wednesday, the shuttering of social media accounts is the latest in a series of censorship trial balloons that are being launched by the technology monopolies, in coordination with US government entities, to test out and perfect, piece by piece, the mechanisms for silencing speech and suppressing political dissent, especially of left-wing, socialist organizations and the struggles of the working class.

The degree of complicity by the corporate controlled media in the expanding censorship operations is significant. One searches in vain to find a single publication or news site that will question, much less challenge, the latest justifications for censoring, deleting content or disabling social media accounts.

The ruling elite is frightened by the potential of the Internet and social media to be used as a means of educating and organizing opposition to the growth of economic inequality, expanding war and attacks on democratic rights.

A major component of this drive to censor the internet is the targeting of left-wing, anti-war, and socialist political organizations. Google’s efforts to promote “authoritative” news outlets over “alternative” viewpoints has resulted in a major drop in search traffic to left-wing sites, with search traffic to the World Socialist Web Site dropping by 75 percent since April 2017.

On Monday, Facebook deleted the longstanding account of a WSWs contributor who uses a pseudonym and demanded proof of identity in order to restore access.

On Thursday, readers and supporters were repeatedly prevented from sharing links to WSWS articles from their Facebook accounts. Their posts were deleted and a message from Facebook was displayed saying “We removed this post because it looks like spam to us.”

Amid a growing strike movement by workers all over the world, including Ryanair pilots and cabin crew in Europe and UPS workers in the United States, the moves by the technology giants to censor the internet will only intensify. We urge all of those seeking to fight internet censorship to contact the *World Socialist Web Site*.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>