

Facebook plans political censorship in anticipation of “chaos” and “violence” in the 2020 US elections

By Kevin Reed
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The social media monopoly Facebook is preparing to take “exceptional measures” including aggressive action to “restrict the circulation of content” on its network if the 2020 US elections on November 3 result in “chaos” or “violence.”

In an interview with Facebook Vice President of Global Affairs and Communications Nick Clegg, the *Financial Times* reported that the social media corporation had “drawn up plans” for handling “a range of outcomes including widespread civic unrest” or other unprecedented “political dilemmas” during the counting of in-person and mail-in ballots.

Clegg told FT, “There are some break-glass options available to us if there really is an extremely chaotic and, worse still, violent set of circumstances.” Although he did not reveal any details about Facebook’s planned responses, Clegg referenced the actions taken by the world’s number one social media platform previously in countries where social unrest erupted.

Clegg said, “We have acted aggressively in other parts of the world where we think that there is real civic instability and we obviously have the tools to do that [again],” adding that the company had taken “pretty exceptional measures to significantly restrict the circulation of content on our platform.” *FT* said Clegg was referring to the actions taken by Facebook to reduce the content reach of “malicious actors” and “repeated rule breakers” during recent periods of unrest in Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

The Right Honorable Sir Nick Clegg is a leading political figure in the UK. He was the Deputy Prime Minister under Prime Minister David Cameron (2010-2015) and leader of the Liberal Democrats from 2007-2015. He was hired by Facebook in October 2018 as a lobbyist and chief international public relations officer.

While the FT report emphasized “concerns” about how President Trump would use social media to “interfere in the process” of the elections or “contest the results or call for violent protest, potentially triggering a constitutional crisis,” the real fear for Facebook and Clegg is that there will be a mass response to the election crisis that will move outside of the US two-party political establishment.

Significantly, *FT* says, “Facebook has been exploring how to handle about 70 different potential scenarios, according to a person familiar with the situation, with staff including world-class military scenario planners.” In other words, Facebook is collaborating with military-intelligence and bracing for the eruption of mass social unrest in the US during the 2020 elections.

Clegg also said that any extraordinary measures taken by Facebook “will fall to a team of top executives including himself and chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg—with chief executive Mark Zuckerberg holding the right to overrule positions.” He said, “We’ve slightly reorganized things such that we have a fairly tight arrangement by which decisions are taken at different levels [depending on] the gravity of the controversy attached.”

If true, the description by Clegg makes clear that decisions to utilize the unprecedented power of Facebook political censorship in the hands of a relatively small number of corporate executives. Clegg added that Facebook was committing a significant “amount of resources” at its “Election Operations Center” and “voter information hub.”

Facebook has launched an infrastructure within their platform that they have characterized as “the largest voting information campaign in American history.” At the top of the priority list of this information campaign is “election security” and “fighting interference” which

includes teams of more than 35,000 people.

Facebook says it is increasing its coordination with “law enforcement agencies like the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security, and with state officials, civil society groups, and other technology companies.” In explaining how they will “prevent election interference,” Facebook states that its security teams will identify “suspicious activity” and “take down coordinated networks of inauthentic accounts, Pages and Groups that seek to manipulate public debate.”

It should be pointed out that Facebook’s election information infrastructure has been built in collaboration with the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC). BPC is a Washington, D.C. think tank founded in 2007 by former leading US political figures Howard Baker and Bob Dole (Republicans) and Tom Daschle and George Mitchell (Democrats) to preserve and defend the US two-party system amid growing conflict within the political establishment.

Meanwhile, the FBI is spreading its own misinformation in advance of the elections. In a Public Service Announcement on Tuesday, the FBI said that “foreign actors and cybercriminals could create new websites, change existing websites, and create or share corresponding social media content to spread false information in an attempt to discredit the electoral process and undermine confidence in US democratic institutions.”

The latest news and information about Facebook’s censorship plans for the US elections confirms the warnings issued previously by the *World Socialist Web Site* about the meaning of the ongoing collaboration of the tech giants with the intelligence state during both the pandemic and on “election security.” The secret meetings being held with White House officials and federal police and intelligence agencies were preparing the censorship regime that is now at least partially being made public.

Going back to 2016, there has been a steady stream of unproven allegations of “foreign interference” by the Russians, the Iranians and the Chinese in the US elections. In reality, the threat to “US democratic institutions” comes from the Trump administration and the refusal of the Democrats to do anything about it. Additionally, the confidence of the public in these institutions is being undermined each day by the grotesque social inequality between the super rich who control the Democrats and Republicans and the reality of life facing millions of people under the capitalist system.

The degree of emergency censorship planning by Facebook—in concert with police agencies and the

surveillance state—is a measure of the awareness within ruling circles of the potential for an eruption of mass struggles by the working class and youth in the US after what will be on election day nearly nine months of economic and social crisis triggered by the coronavirus pandemic.

The ruling establishment is well aware that social media platforms such as Facebook are being utilized to organize the mass protests across the country against police violence as well as the growing opposition within the working class to returning to work and school under the unsafe health conditions of the pandemic. Above all, the censorship efforts are aimed at preventing the socialist political analysis and program of the World Socialist Web Site from reaching the working class under conditions of mass protests and a constitutional crisis in November.

While the open threats by Donald Trump to discredit or outright reject the results of the election and refuse to leave office should be taken seriously, workers and young people cannot place an ounce of confidence in the campaign of Biden-Harris or the Democratic Party to defend the constitution or uphold democratic forms of rule in the US. The working class must intervene independently of both parties of the corporate and financial elite, take matters into its own hands and fight for the program of revolutionary socialism represented only by the SEP in the 2020 elections with its candidates Joseph Kishore for US President and Norissa Santa Cruz for US Vice President.

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