

Protesters urge Twitter to ban white supremacists from platform

November 20 2019, by Levi Sumagaysay



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Members of advocacy groups converged on Twitter headquarters in San Francisco on Tuesday, bearing signs reading #StopRacistTwitter as they urged the company to ban white supremacists.

The coalition also delivered a petition with more than 100,000 signatures calling on Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey to take action. A few activists were allowed inside the building to deliver the petition, which was accepted by security guards. The company confirmed it received the petition.

More than 50 civil-rights groups make up the Change the Terms coalition, including Color Of Change, MediaJustice and Free Press. About a dozen people were at Tuesday's protest. They also carried signs with tweets by white nationalists and including Richard Spencer, who had been suspended from Twitter before being reinstated.

"The company's race-neutral approach to combating hateful activities on its site obscures the real harms inflicted on marginalized communities," said Free Press in a report released Tuesday. The report pointed to Twitter's suspension of former KKK leader David Duke, who is now back on the platform. It also noted that Katie Hopkins, a British far-right media personality who has called for a "final solution" and has wished physical ill will against refugees, remains on Twitter.

Their continued presence on Twitter doesn't jibe with Dorsey's pledge last year to "increase the collective health, openness, and civility of public conversation" on the platform, the group said.

"Twitter refusing to take real action to regulate online hate speech that we know incites violence is beyond irresponsible," said Jelani Drew, campaign manager at CREDO Action, in a statement Tuesday. "It is long past time for Twitter to step up and stop giving violent racists a megaphone and platform for hate." Activists also urged the company to be more transparent about its policies and enforcement.

"Twitter was founded on freedom of expression, and we welcome the public to express their views," a Twitter spokeswoman said Tuesday. "Our rules are clear: There is no place on Twitter for hateful conduct,

terrorist organizations or violent extremist groups." She said the company has permanently suspended the accounts of 186 groups, half of which "advocate violence against civilians alongside some form of extremist white supremacist ideology."

Another social networking giant, Facebook, last year announced it would remove white supremacist content and this year said it would extend that ban to white nationalist and separatist content.

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