

# Facebook ad boycott organizers say no progress on hate speech

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Facebook failed to allay concerns of activists organizing an ad boycott of the leading social network to press for more aggressive action on removing toxic and inflammatory content

Organizers of a Facebook ad boycott vowed to press on with their

campaign, saying the social network's top executives had failed to offer meaningful action on curbing hateful content.

At a virtual meeting that included Facebook chief executive Mark Zuckerberg, the #StopHateForProfit coalition leaders "didn't hear anything... to convince us that Zuckerberg and his colleagues are taking action," said Jessica Gonzalez of the activist group Free Press, a coalition member.

Rashad Robinson, president of the activist group Color of Change, told reporters on a conference call the meeting was "a disappointment."

Robinson said the executives "showed up to the meeting expecting an A for attendance," but that "we did not get answers to questions we put on the table."

The meeting was seen by Facebook as an opportunity to hear from boycott organizers and "reaffirm" a commitment to combating hate on the platform, a spokesperson told AFP.

"They want Facebook to be free of hate speech and so do we," the spokesperson said, noting steps the social network has taken to ban white supremacist groups and fight interference with voting or the census.

"We know we will be judged by our actions not by our words and are grateful to these groups and many others for their continued engagement."

The meeting took place during a boycott which has grown to nearly 1,000 advertisers pressing for more aggressive action from Facebook on toxic and inflammatory content which promotes violence and hate—spurred by the wave of protests calling for social justice and racial equity.

"This isn't over. We will continue to expand the boycott until Facebook takes our demands seriously. We won't be distracted by Facebook's spin today or any day," Gonzalez said.

Anti-Defamation League CEO Johnathan Greenblatt said of the meeting: "We saw little and heard just about nothing."

Greenblatt said the organizers had 10 specific demands for Facebook but "got no commitment or clear outcomes to any of them."

Some of the activists say Facebook should do more to curb disinformation from political leaders including President Donald Trump, and limit his comments which critics say promote violence and divisiveness.

Among posts which particularly roiled activists was Trump's comment during widespread protests that "when the looting starts, the shooting starts," which critics said was an incitement to violence.



Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg says the leading social network will announce policy changes following the release of its civil rights audit, amid a growing boycott aimed at pressing the platform to remove toxic and hateful content

### **Sandberg pledges more steps**

Facebook has steadfastly refused to fact-check political speech and has a largely hands-off policy on comments from world leaders.

But it has said it will take down comments that could lead to imminent harm, and recently updated a policy to label a post which violates its rules, even if it is allowed to remain online for being "newsworthy."

Earlier Tuesday, Facebook's chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg pledged further steps to remove toxic and hateful content ahead of the discussions with the boycott organizers, led by the NAACP, Color of Change and the Anti-Defamation League.

She added that the Silicon Valley giant would be announcing policy updates as a result of discussions with civil rights activists and its own audit of civil rights practices.

"Facebook has to get better at finding and removing hateful content," Sandberg wrote.

"We are making changes—not for financial reasons or advertiser pressure, but because it is the right thing to do."

Sandberg said the final report of the independent civil rights audit would be published Wednesday following a two-year review, and that this would be used to guide Facebook policy changes.

"While the audit was planned and most of it carried out long before recent events, its release couldn't come at a more important time," she said.

"While we won't be making every change they call for, we will put more of their proposals into practice soon."

The auditors are set to issue scathing criticism of Facebook, according to The New York Times, which obtained a draft.

"Unfortunately, in our view Facebook's approach to civil rights remains too reactive and piecemeal," the draft says according to the Times.

"The Auditors do not believe that Facebook is sufficiently attuned to the

depth of concern on the issue of polarization and the way that the algorithms used by Facebook inadvertently fuel extreme and polarizing content."

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