

Twitter's new 'violent speech' policy similar to past rules

March 2 2023, by Barbara Ortutay



A sign at Twitter headquarters is shown in San Francisco, Dec. 8, 2022. Twitter announced a new policy prohibiting “violent speech” on Wednesday, March 1, 2023, though overall it sounds very similar to the rules against violent threats it had on the books long before Elon Musk took over. Credit: AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File

Twitter on Wednesday unveiled a [new policy](#) prohibiting "violent speech" on its platform, though the rules appear very similar to guidelines against violent threats that the company had on its books before Elon Musk took it over.

Among the updates, Twitter expanded its policy to include a ban on "coded language," which is often referred to as "dog whistles," used to indirectly incite violence. It also added a rule that prohibits "threatening to damage civilian homes and shelters, or infrastructure that is essential to daily, civic, or business activities."

The additions come as San Francisco-based Twitter [prepares to comply](#) with new European Union rules that go into effect this fall. The new rules, called the Digital Services Act, require [tech companies](#) to better police their platforms for material that, for instance, promotes terrorism, child sexual abuse, hate speech and commercial scams.

Twitter's new violent-speech policy states that "healthy conversations can't thrive when violent speech is used to deliver a message. As a result, we have a [zero tolerance policy](#) towards violent speech in order to ensure the safety of our users and prevent the normalization of violent actions."

But Twitter already had a version of this rule on the books in October 2021, a year before Musk bought the company for \$44 billion, according to a snapshot of its site rules on the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. The [old rule](#) stated that Twitter has a "zero tolerance policy against violent threats. Those deemed to be sharing violent threats will face immediate and permanent suspension of their account."

Twitter also edited and reshuffled policies, though some changes appeared purely cosmetic. For instance, the prohibition of violent threats and wishing harm on a person or a group of people was previously in a section called "Abusive behavior" and now it is in a new section called

"Violent Speech Policy."

The company kept on is books a policy prohibiting the "targeted [misgendering or deadnaming](#) of transgender individuals," which some transgender advocates had worried would be removed.

Of course, policies are only as good as their enforcement. Having lost the majority of its workforce through mass layoffs, firings and resignations, it is not clear if Twitter will be able to hold its users to its new—and old—policies. The system was far from perfect to begin with, especially in countries outside the U.S. and the E.U.

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