Facebook ad boycott organizers cite no progress on hate speech
7 July 2020, by Rob Lever

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 the Facebook ad boycott vowed Tuesday to continue 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 today to convince us that Zuckerberg and his colleagues are taking action," said Jessica Gonzalez of the activist group Free Press, one of the coalition members.

The meeting took place amid 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.

"I'm deeply disappointed that Facebook still refuses to hold itself accountable to its users, its advertisers and society at large," Gonzalez said in a statement.

"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."

Sleeping Giants, another activist group involved in the boycott, said it was clear at the meeting that Facebook executives "intend to take no real action to deal with hate and disinformation on their platform."

The boycott has mushroomed to include global brands and small companies joining the effort to pressure Facebook, spurred by the wave of protests calling for social justice and racial equity.

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.

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

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 will 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 boycott organizers are seeking a top level executive to evaluate "products and policies for discrimination, bias, and hate," as well as independent audits of "identity-based hate and misinformation."

Gonzalez said Facebook should take responsibility for the promotion of violence on the platform including the massacres of Rohingya people in Myanmar, and mass killings which were promoted or streamed on Facebook.

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