Conservative website Parler forced offline: web trackers

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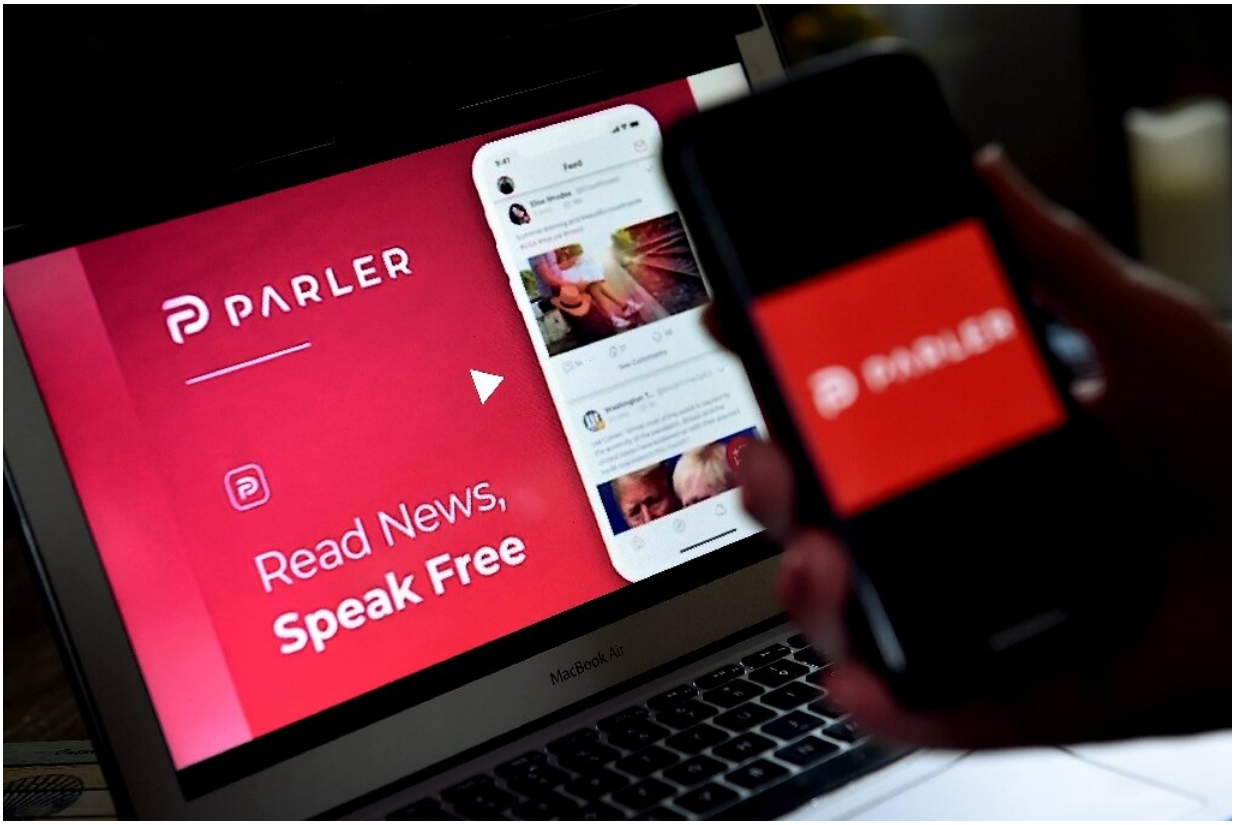

The conservative social network Parler was forced offline, tracking websites showed, a day after Amazon warned the company would lose access to its servers for its failure to properly police violent content

The conservative social network Parler was forced offline Monday, tracking websites showed, after Amazon warned the company would lose

access to its servers for its failure to properly police violent content.

The site's popularity soared in recent weeks, becoming the number one download from Apple's App Store after the much larger Twitter banned US President Donald Trump from its platform for his role in inciting a riot at the US Capitol last week.

Messages of support for Wednesday's attack in Washington DC—along with calls for more demonstrations—had flourished on the platform, leading Google to remove it from its app store on Friday, followed by Apple on Saturday.

Amazon then confirmed it would suspend the platform from its cloud hosting services for allowing "threats of violence."

In a letter to Parler's owners, the web giant said it would suspend service by 11:59 PM on Sunday (0759 GMT Monday).

Tracking website Down For Everyone Or Just Me showed Parler offline from just after midnight, suggesting its owners had not been able to find a new hosting partner.

In a series of posts on Parler before the site went down, CEO John Matze accused the tech giants of a "war on free speech."

"They will NOT win! We are the worlds last hope for free speech and free information," he said.

Parler did not respond to a request for comment from AFP.

The social network, launched in 2018, operates much like Twitter, with profiles to follow and "parleys" instead of tweets.

In its early days, the platform attracted a crowd of ultra-conservative and even extreme-right users.

But it now attracts many more traditional Republican voices.

Fox News star host Sean Hannity has 7.6 million followers, while his colleague Tucker Carlson has 4.4 million.

Elected officials present include Republicans Devin Nunes, a California congressman, and South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem.

Trump is not known to have a Parler profile.

Safe haven

Parler's recent growth was supercharged after last week's violence in DC as new users, furious over Twitter's ban on Trump, flocked to the app.

In one now-deleted post, an account purporting to belong to Lin Wood, a pro-Trump lawyer, called for Vice President Mike Pence to be put in front of a firing squad—threats which US media have reported led to a secret service investigation.

Supporters of President Trump expressed outrage at the news of the website being taken down.

Ahead of the shutdown, the President's son, Donald Trump Jr., complained that "big tech has totally eliminated the notion of free speech in America."

Prominent pro-Trump commentator and conspiracy theorist Mark Dice took to Twitter to accuse "Marxists" of taking Parler offline, urging followers to register on secure messaging app Telegram and Gab,

another site popular with the far-right.

With tech giants making their opposition clear, conservative sites such as Parler are likely going to have to find ways to adjust.

The DLive video streaming service, used by several protesters during the invasion of the Capitol, closed seven of its channels and pulled more than 100 videos from the site.

Gab may now also become a model for other websites, with CEO Andrew Torba claiming it had atrracted 600,000 new users Sunday.

The platform drew fierce criticism in 2018 when investigators found that the shooter who killed 11 people in an attack on a Pittsburgh synagogue had earlier posted anti-Semitic messages on the site.

It has installed its own servers so as not to be dependent on outside providers.

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