

# Facebook to curb livestreaming

## Facebook would ban Live users who shared extremist content

AFP | Paris, France

Facebook announced yesterday it would tighten access to its livestreaming feature as New Zealand's premier Jacinda Ardern and French leader Emmanuel Macron prepared to launch the global "Christchurch Call" initiative to tackle the spread of extremism online.

Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg has been under intense pressure since March when a white supremacist gunman used Facebook Live to stream his rampage at two mosques in the New Zealand city of Christchurch, which left 51 people dead.

The California-based platform said it would ban Facebook Live users who shared extremist content and seek to reinforce its own internal controls to stop the spread of offensive videos.

"Following the horrific recent terrorist attacks in New Zealand, we've been reviewing what more we can do to limit our services from being used to cause harm or spread hate," Facebook vice-president of integrity Guy Rosen said in a statement.

Ardern and Macron will later issue the Christchurch Call to fight the spread of hateful and terror-related content along with leaders from Britain, Canada, Norway, Jordan and Senegal, who will also be in Paris.

The largely symbolic initiative is intended to keep up the pressure on social media companies who face growing calls from politicians across the world to stop their platforms being abused.

"It's an action plan, it's the start of something," Ardern told CNN in an interview on Wednesday.

Many countries have already tightened legislation to introduce penalties for companies that fail to take down offensive content once it is flagged by authorities.

"We need to get in front of this (problem) before harm is done," Ardern added. "This is not just about regulation, but bringing companies to the table and saying they have a role too."

The political meeting in Paris will run in parallel to an initiative launched by Macron called "Tech for Good" which will bring together 80 tech chiefs to discuss how to harness technologies for the common good.

The heads of US tech giants Wikipedia, Uber, Twitter, Microsoft and Google will attend, but not Zuckerberg who held private

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GUY ROSEN  
FACEBOOK VICE-PRESIDENT OF  
INTEGRITY

one-to-one talks with Macron last week.

The social network giant will instead be represented by its vice president for global affairs and communications Nick Clegg, the former British deputy premier.

"I've spoken to Mark Zuckerberg directly twice now... and he did give Facebook's support for this call to action," Ardern said.

The US government has not endorsed the Christchurch Call and will only be represented at a junior level at a meeting of G7 digital ministers which is also taking place on Wednesday in Paris.

## 'Horrible new trend'

In an opinion piece in *The New York Times* over the weekend, Ardern said the Christchurch massacre underlined "a horrifying new trend" in extremist atrocities.

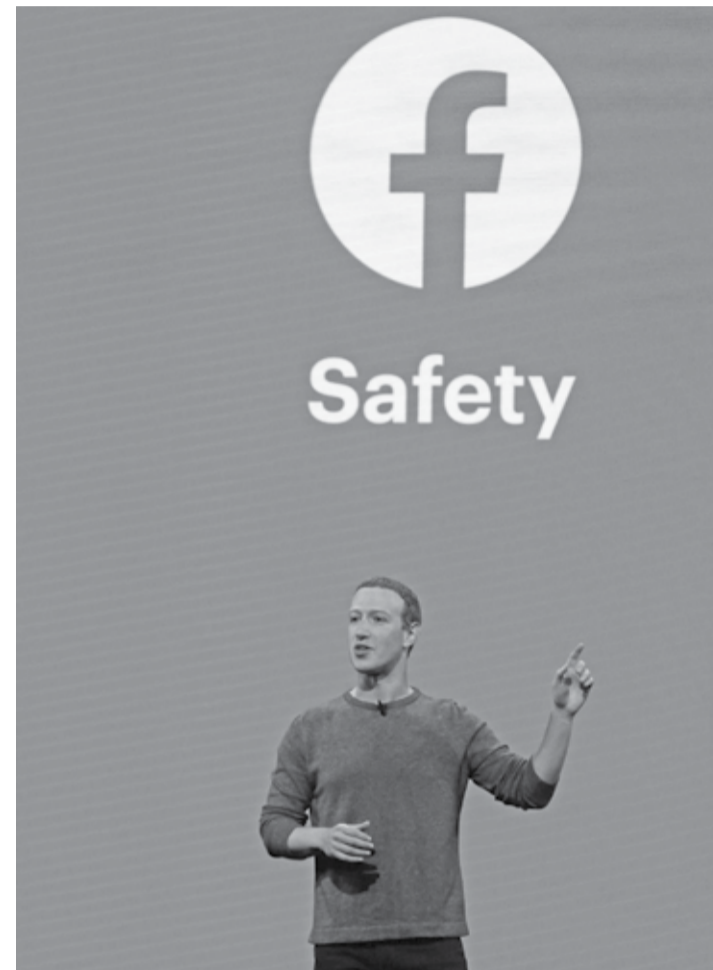
"It was designed to be broadcast on the internet. The entire event was livestreamed... the scale of this horrific video's reach was staggering," she wrote.

Ardern said Facebook removed 1.5 million copies of the video within 24 hours of the attack, but she still found herself among those who inadvertently saw the footage when it auto-played on their social media feeds.

Around 8,000 New Zealanders called a mental health hotline after seeing the video, she told CNN.

"(We're) asking both nations and private corporations to make changes to prevent the posting of terrorist content online, to ensure its efficient and fast removal and to prevent the use of livestreaming as a tool for broadcasting terrorist attacks," she wrote in *The Times*.

"One of the challenges we faced in the days after the attack was a proliferation of many different variants of the video of the attack," vice-president of integrity Rosen said.



Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg delivers the opening keynote introducing new Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, and Instagram privacy features at the Facebook F8 Conference at McEnery Convention Center in San Jose, California

"People -- not always intentionally -- shared edited versions of the video which made it hard for our systems to detect."

## eSwatini says fake polygamy story 'insult' to king and country



King Mswati III, Africa's last absolute monarch  
Mbabane, eSwatini

The government of eSwatini on Tuesday angrily denied viral online reports that King Mswati III, Africa's last absolute monarch who has 14 wives, had ordered men to have at least two marriages or face jail.

The story, carried by the *Zambian Observer* and picked up by several other online publications, said that Swazi men would have to marry several wives starting from June.

As well as 14 wives, King Mswati has more than 25 children and a reputation for lavish spending while 63 per cent of his 1.3 million subjects in the kingdom formerly known as Swaziland live in poverty.

The story, first published on Monday, said the government

would sponsor marriage ceremonies and offer houses to men who entered into polygamous marriages.

It said the king "has declared in... Swaziland that men will from June 2019 be required to marry at least two or more wives or be jailed if they fail to do so".

Government spokesman Percy Simelane called the story "malicious" and "poisonous". "His Majesty has not made any pronouncement to that effect as it has never been an issue raised," by the people, Simelane said.

He said the story was "not only an insult to the monarchy and the culture of eSwatini but a disgrace to journalism".

The government has demanded that the newspaper retract its story.

## China blocks all language editions of Wikipedia

Previously, most editions of Wikipedia -- besides the Chinese language version, which was reportedly blocked in 2015 -- were available

Beijing, China

Beijing has broadened its block of online encyclopedia Wikipedia to include all language editions, reported an internet censorship research group, ahead of the country's most politically explosive anniversary.

According to a report by the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), China started blocking all language editions of Wikipedia last month.

Previously, most editions of Wikipedia -- besides the Chinese language version, which was reportedly blocked in 2015 -- were available, OONI said in their report.

AFP could not open any of Wikipedia's versions in China on Wednesday.

"At the end of the day, the content that really matters is Chinese-language content," said Charlie Smith, the pseudonym of one of the co-founders of Greatfire.org, which tracks online censorship in China.

"Blocking access to all language versions of Wikipedia for internet users in China is just symbolic," he told AFP. "It sym-



Representative picture

bolises the fear that the Chinese authorities have of the truth."

Wikimedia Foundation, the non-profit organisation that hosts Wikipedia, did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment.

Topics that are deemed too "sensitive" are also scrubbed, such as the 1989 crackdown on Tiananmen pro-democracy protesters which will mark its 30th anniversary on June 4.

The expanded block of Wikipedia comes as Chinese authorities ramp up online controls and crack down on Great Firewall circumvention tools, such as virtual private network (VPN) software, under Chinese President Xi Jinping.

In November, China's cyberspace authority said it had "cleaned up" 9,800 accounts on



China's online censorship apparatus -- dubbed the "Great Firewall" -- blocks a large number of foreign sites in the country, such as Google, Facebook and The New York Times.

Chinese social media platforms like messaging app WeChat and the Twitter-like Weibo that it accused of spreading "politically harmful" information and rumours.

Chinese Twitter users have also said that they have experienced intimidation from local authorities -- and even detention -- for their tweets.

The latest move to block all versions of Wikipedia could be linked to online translation tools, which make it easy for Chinese users to read anything on Wikipedia, explained Smith. Images can also be considered taboo, he said.

"A picture is worth a thousand words, and there is no dearth of Tiananmen-related imagery on the Wikipedia website," Smith added.