

Israel Accuses Twitter of 'Double Standard' for Flagging Trump but Not Iran

A Twitter official on Wednesday defended the platform's decision not to flag tweets by Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei calling for violence against Israel, suggesting that such speech is "commentary on political issues of the day."

Ylwa Pettersson, Twitter's head of policy for the Nordics and Israel, was confronted by Israeli leaders during a Knesset hearing about anti-Semitism on social media. Pro-Israel activist and human rights attorney Arsen Ostrovsky asked Pettersson why Twitter has chosen to flag a recent Tweet by US President Donald Trump, but not Khamenei "who has literally called for the genocide of Israel and the Jewish people."

On May 29, Twitter put a special label on a Trump tweet regarding nationwide unrest following the death of George Floyd.

Pettersson responded: "We have an approach toward leaders that says that direct interactions with fellow public figures, comments on political issues of the day, or foreign policy saber-rattling on military-economic issues are generally not in violation of our rules."

I kid you not! At Knesset hearing on Antisemitism, @Twitter rep tells me they flag @realDonaldTrump because it serves 'public conversation', but not Iran's @khamenei_ir call for GENOCIDE, which passes for acceptable 'commentary on political issues of the day'. cc. @CotlerWunsh

– Arsen Ostrovsky (@Ostrov_A) July 29, 2020

Knesset member Michael Cotler-Wunsh interrupted Pettersson and challenged her further.

“So, calling for genocide is OK, but commenting on political situations in certain countries is not okay?” Wunsh asked.

“If a world leader violates our rules but there is a clear interest in keeping that up on the service we may place it behind a notice that provides some more context about the violation and allows people to click through if they wish to see that type of content,” Pettersson responded.

She then suggested that Trump’s tweet was flagged on May 29 because it “was violating our policies regarding the glorification of violence based on the historical context of the last line of that tweet and the risk that it could possibly inspire harm and similar actions.”

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