

Platform Ban Round-up: Critics say Too Little, Too Late

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Finally spurred to action by scenes of a disinformation-fueled mob of insurrectionists storming the Capitol, the major US social media platforms moved to block Donald Trump from his social media accounts.

Twitter, after demanding Trump delete three tweets, blocked him for 12 hours. Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg, in a [post](#) that cited a "fundamentally different" context, said Trump would be barred from Facebook and Instagram at least through President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration on Jan. 20.

Snapchat also suspended Trump's account, without specifying when it might lift its ban, [Ars Technica reported](#).

Immediate reaction to the moves among academics, activists, and journalists studying social media seem to have ranged from "what took so long?" to "too little, too late."

"And all it took was Trump inciting nazis to storm the Capitol..." [tweeted](#) Deen Freelon.

Daniel Kreiss [tweeted](#), "The basic issue is that it NEVER should have taken the assault on the Capitol for platforms to take these actions."

"Facebook and Twitter are profoundly culpable," [tweeted](#) Shoshana Zuboff. "A future at their mercy is intolerable. They must permanently end Trump's access to the global info bloodstream."

Siva Vaidhyanathan, one of Facebook's harshest critics, [tweeted](#), "Let's not pretend that blocking Trump on FB solves anything. Let's not pretend that letting him call for violence and the end of democracy is harmless 'speech.'"

"Trump should have been banned from [Facebook] years ago, like we demanded. Suspending him for the next 2 weeks is a stopgap," [tweeted](#) Arisha Michelle Hatch. "Zuckerberg must go further and ban Trump permanently. He staged an insurrection against the democratic process in plain sight - ban him for good."

In their reporting on Facebook's move, BuzzFeed's Jane Lytvynenko and Ryan Mac quoted internal Facebook employee conversations, one of whom criticized the move as too little, too late, and an attempt to appease an incoming Democratic administration. Earlier, Mac reported that Facebook had frozen comments on internal discussions about removing Trump from the platform.

New York Times tech reporter Sheera Frenkel wrote in a tweet, "Already, people inside Facebook are asking why Zuckerberg made this call when similar bans have not taken place in countries around the world where political leaders have used their platform to inflame and inspire mobs and protests. They are also asking why this took so long."

Other social media users have pointed out that Twitter and Facebook's moves came just after the Georgia run-off elections handed control of Congress to the Democrats.

As others mentioned, another issue obscured by a focus on social media bans is that older, more traditional media are implicated in the amplification — unintentional or not — of extremist discourse and misinformation.