

Facebook completely bans QAnon and labels it a 'militarized social movement'

Facebook has banned all forms of content related to the radical fringe conspiracy group QAnon with the exception of posts from individual profiles, marking the company's most dramatic escalation in the fight against misinformation and what Facebook is calling "militarized social movements." The company announced the change on its website as an update to its previous moderation sweep in August that banned close to 1,000 QAnon groups.

"Starting today, we will remove any Facebook Pages, Groups and Instagram accounts representing QAnon, even if they contain no violent content. This is an update from the initial policy in August that removed Pages, Groups and Instagram accounts associated with QAnon when they discussed potential violence while imposing a series of restrictions to limit the reach of other Pages, Groups and Instagram accounts associated with the movement," the company writes in its update. A Facebook spokesperson tells *The Verge* that while the ban targets organized behavior on the platform, it does not prohibit individuals from posting about QAnon to their person Facebook profiles.

Facebook says QAnon content, which purports that a secret society of pedophiles is plotting to against US President Donald Trump, represents an "identified Militarized Social Movement," which is prohibited under its current rules. In other words, Facebook is reclassifying QAnon as no different than an extremist militia group, but not quite on the level of

a terrorist organization or full-fledged hate group.

Facebook considers QAnon no different than an extremist militia group

"We are starting to enforce this updated policy today and are removing content accordingly, but this work will take time and need to continue in the coming days and weeks," Facebook writes. "We've been vigilant in enforcing our policy and studying its impact on the platform but we've seen several issues that led to today's update. For example, while we've removed QAnon content that celebrates and supports violence, we've seen other QAnon content tied to different forms of real world harm, including recent claims that the west coast wildfires were started by certain groups, which diverted attention of local officials from fighting the fires and protecting the public."

Unlike other social platforms that have taken more proactive measures to prevent the spread of QAnon, Facebook has been steadily addressing the conspiracy movement's fast growth across its social networks in stages. That's led many critics to accuse the company of abetting the spread of misinformation and other potentially dangerous real-world side effects of movements like QAnon.

Facebook most recently tried to combat QAnon's takeover of a hashtag, #savethechildren, by injecting "credible" information for users to find when searching for child safety content on the platform. It also banned ads praising the movement and other "militia and anarchist" groups.

Update 10/6, 6:17PM ET: Clarified that Facebook will still allow individuals to post QAnon content to their personal Facebook profiles.

<https://www.theverge.com/2020/10/6/21504887/facebook-qanon-ban-all-apps-pages-groups-instagram-accounts>