Facebook pushes back against Biden remarks on COVID-19 misinformation

Facebook continued its pushback Saturday against President Biden's comment that social media platforms were "killing people" with COVID-19 misinformation, in a blog post from its vice president of integrity Guy Rosen. The post states that the "facts tell a very different story to the one promoted by the administration in recent days."

"At a time when COVID-19 cases are rising in America, the Biden administration has chosen to blame a handful of American social media companies," Rosen wrote. "While social media plays an important role in society, it is clear that we need a whole of society approach to end this pandemic. And facts — not allegations — should help inform that effort."

(The post was titled "Moving Past the Finger Pointing: Support for COVID-19 vaccines is high on Facebook and growing.")

On Friday, *NBC News* reporter Peter Alexander asked Biden what his message was "to platforms like Facebook." The president replied: "they're killing people … the only pandemic we have is among the unvaccinated, and they're killing people." See the exchange below:

According to Rosen's post, Facebook has worked with Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and the University of Maryland on a global survey on COVID-19 symptoms, testing, and vaccination rates. The results, Rosen writes, show 85 percent of Facebook users in the US have or want to be vaccinated against the coronavirus. "President Biden's goal was for 70%

of Americans to be vaccinated by July 4. Facebook is not the reason this goal was missed," Rosen added.

Biden's comment came amid growing pressure from the White House toward Facebook and other social platforms to better stem the flow of coronavirus vaccine misinformation on their sites. A Thursday report from Surgeon General Vivek Murthy on "confronting health information," included recommendations for different stakeholders, including tech platforms, individuals, educators, health professionals, funders, researchers, journalists, and governments. The recommendations for the platforms included suggestions to "strengthen the monitoring of misinformation," and "amplify communications from trusted messengers and subject matter experts."

Murthy told reporters that Facebook product features "reward us for sharing emotionally charged content, not accurate content," adding that social media sites' algorithms "give us more of what we click on, pulling us deeper and deeper into a well of misinformation."

In Saturday's post, Rosen argued that Facebook had already taken action on Murthy's recommendations.

A Facebook spokesperson said Friday that the "accusations" weren't supported by the facts. Several Republicans also expressed concern about the White House's efforts; Congressman Ken Buck (R-CO) said the White House was "colluding with Facebook to censor Americans."

The White House didn't immediately reply to a request seeking comment on Saturday.

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