

Facebook says it's banning the phrase 'stop the steal'



Facebook is cracking down on potentially violent sedition ahead of the January 20th inauguration of President-elect Joe Biden, including a widespread temporary ban on phrases associated with the mob that attacked the Capitol building on January 6th. The policy, detailed in a post published Monday by Facebook vice presidents Guy Rosen and Monika Bickert, includes any content containing the words "stop the steal," an unusually aggressive policy that appears to still be rolling out across the network.

"We are treating the next two weeks as a major civic event," the post reads. "We are now removing content containing the phrase 'stop the steal' under our Coordinating Harm policy from Facebook and Instagram... With continued attempts to organize events against the outcome of the US presidential election that can lead to violence, and use of the term by those involved in Wednesday's violence in DC, we're taking this additional step in the lead up to the inauguration."

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violence last week”

“It may take some time to scale up our enforcement of this new step,” the post continues, “but we have already removed a significant number of posts.”

Confirming that enforcement is still spotty. *The Verge* was able to post text containing the phrase “stop the steal” without any content being immediately removed.

Facebook will also keep in place a number of policies it had established in advance of the election, including automatically disabling comments on any posts in groups pages “that start to have a high rate of hate speech.”

There are already signs that the days leading up to the inauguration may bring violence from supporters of President Trump. The FBI has warned that “armed protests” are planned at all 50 state capitals as well as Washington, DC. As many as 15,000 National Guard troops will be deployed in Washington during the inauguration in case of any civil unrest.

In the immediate aftermath of the Capitol raid, Facebook blocked a string of posts from Trump before suspending his account indefinitely. The platform has also taken a harsher approach toward Stop the Steal accounts in the wake of those actions, treating them as likely to incite violence.

In an interview with *Reuters* this week, Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg argued that Facebook’s aggressive moderation had largely forced violent groups off of the platform. “We again took down QAnon, Proud Boys, Stop the Steal, anything that was taking about possible violence last week,” Sandberg said. “I think these events were largely organized on platforms that don’t have our abilities to stop hate, don’t have our standards and don’t have our transparency.”

<https://www.theverge.com/2021/1/11/22225643/facebook-stop-the-steal-ban-inauguration-day-capitol-mob-attack>