YouTube drafting ‘creator-on-creator harassment’ rules after Steven Crowder incident

YouTube is working on new policies to prevent “creator-on-creator harassment” that it will announce later this year, the company said today. The statement was made by Youtube’s chief product officer, Neal Mohan, who briefly spoke about the issue at YouTube’s VidCon keynote this evening, where both creators and industry insiders were gathered in Anaheim, California.

The news didn’t come with any concrete details about what those policies will actually look like, but YouTube said it considers them to be “just as important to the YouTube community as any product launch.”

YouTube’s new policy is likely meant to address the recent Steven Crowder controversy

“Creator-on-creator harassment” doesn’t have a clear definition, but Mohan’s announcement comes after a series of incidents that fall under the description. In June, conservative pundit Steven Crowder’s use of homophobic language to attack *Vox* host Carlos Maza spawned a heated controversy about how YouTube should moderate speech on its platform and the extent to which it punishes popular creators. “The move wasn’t spurred by the incident between Crowder and Maza,” Mohan told *CNET*, but it’s a safe assumption that incidents like it would fall under the new policies, as well as more internal community drama that leads to hurtful videos and amasses worldwide attention.

(Disclosure: *Vox* is a publication of Vox Media, which also owns *The Verge*.)

A YouTube spokesperson said that Mohan was referring to an announcement the company made in April. YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki wrote at the time that she takes it "very seriously when creators share stories of experiencing harassment on the platform" and that YouTube would "do more to discourage this from happening." Wojcicki mentioned similar plans again last month at the *Code Conference*, saying it was "next on our list."

After Maza tweeted about Crowder's behavior in early June, YouTube briefly removed Crowder's ability to earn ad revenue. YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki later apologized to the LGBTQ community after many creators called the company out over its relative lack of action and poor messaging around the situation. Still, Wojcicki stood by the company's decision not to remove Crowder's videos or ban him entirely, stating that although YouTube did not agree with his actions and words, his videos didn't constitute cyberbullying or harassment. The homophobic language, because it was apparently used in jest and as only fractions of longer videos attempting to rebut Maza's *Strikethrough* series, didn't violate YouTube's policies as far as the company was concerned.

Yet YouTube's current harassment and cyberbullying policies do state that content posted to deliberately humiliate someone, or content that makes hurtful personal comments about someone else, is in violation of its policies. That's partially why YouTube saw so much negative feedback in wake of its decision to stand by Crowder, who many argued did violate those guidelines.

'Creator-on-creator harassment' doesn't have a clear definition yet

"Steven Crowder has a lot of videos, and it took some time for us to look at that and understand it in the context of the video because context really, really matters," Wojcicki said at *Recode*'s CodeCon last month. "We looked at a large number of these videos and we decided they were not violative of our

harassment policies.”

There is always room for YouTube to improve, Wojcicki said, but argued that she believes the company and the platform have come a long way. Having clear-cut policies that state what “creator-on-creator harassment” looks like could be a way to move those policies forward and set them in stone. It’s what the company has recently done with harmful and hateful content, specifically outlining a branch of content that was once deemed borderline content, and banning it.

Correction July 11th, 8:55PM ET: *YouTube said it will update its policies later this year, not in the coming weeks.*

https://www.theverge.com/2019/7/11/20691123/youtube-creator-harassment-vidcon-carlos-maza-steven-crowder-neal-mohan