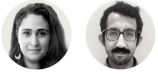


The Taliban's use of social media is a thorny problem for tech companies.



By Sheera Frenkel and Ben Decker

Aug. 19, 2021

As the Taliban took control of Kabul, a spokesman for the group uploaded five videos to his official YouTube page. The videos, each two to three minutes long, showed Taliban leaders congratulating fighters on their victories.

Dozens of pro-Taliban accounts that had sprung up on Twitter in recent days then shared the five videos. Within 24 hours, they had racked up more than half a million views, defying longtime bans by social media companies that have largely designated the Taliban as a terrorist organization.

Now, with governments around the world trying to figure out whether to officially recognize the Taliban as Afghanistan's rulers, companies such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have no easy answers as to whether to continue barring the group online.

That has drawn criticism as the tech companies have in recent months suspended the accounts of some Republican lawmakers and others, seemingly with more ease.

Facebook and YouTube removed the accounts of a Taliban spokesman on Tuesday only after The New York Times requested comment on the accounts. The companies did not address why the accounts, which were formed in September, had been on their platforms even with the ban on the group.

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