Beat: Miscellaneous

Twitter censors neo-Nazi group in Germany with new tool

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USPA News - The social networking website Twitter has censored a German neo-Nazi group on a country-specific level, the first time the company has used the tool after its controversial introduction earlier this year, representatives said on Thursday. "[We] never want to withhold content; good to have tools to do it narrowly and transparently," Alex Macgillivray, Twitter`s chief lawyer, said in a tweet.

"We announced the ability to withhold content back in January. We`re using it now for the first time [regarding] a group deemed illegal in Germany." The account of the far-right group Besseres Hannover was censored after police in the German city of Hanover wrote a letter to Twitter on September 25, asking the company to close the @hannoverticker account after the Interior Ministry in the German state of Lower-Saxony decided to ban the group. "It is disbanded, its assets are seized and all its accounts in social networks have to be closed immediately," Hanover Police wrote in the letter, which was made public by the Chilling Effects website. "It is the task of the Polizeidirektion Hannover (Hanover Police) to enforce the ban." The letter also said German authorities have also launched an investigation into the group on suspicion of forming a criminal association. "I ask you to close this account immediately and not to open any substitute accounts for the organisation `Besseres Hannover`," last month`s letter added. Twitter received a storm of criticism in January when it announced that it will block tweets and user profiles in some countries if they are found to violate local laws. The new policy allows Twitter to block, for example, pro-Nazi content in France and Germany where this is illegal. Previously, Twitter was not able to block content on a local level and was instead forced to remove the content globally. "Starting today, we give ourselves the ability to reactively withhold content from users in a specific country - while keeping it available in the rest of the world," the U.S.-based company said in a blog post in January. It promised to communicate to users when and for what reason content is withheld.

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