



Bari Weiss

@bariweiss

THREAD: THE TWITTER FILES PART FIVE. THE REMOVAL OF TRUMP FROM TWITTER.

1. On the morning of January 8, President Donald Trump, with one remaining strike before being at risk of permanent suspension from Twitter, tweets twice.
2. 6:46 am: "The 75,000,000 great American Patriots who voted for me, AMERICA FIRST, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, will have a GIANT VOICE long into the future. They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!"



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump



The 75,000,000 great American Patriots who voted for me, AMERICA FIRST, and MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN, will have a GIANT VOICE long into the future. They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!

6:46 AM · Jan 8, 2021

85.3K Retweets **31.9K** Quote Tweets **507K** Likes



3. 7:44 am: "To all of those who have asked, I will not be going to the Inauguration on January 20th."



Donald J. Trump ✓
@realDonaldTrump



To all of those who have asked, I will not be going to the Inauguration on January 20th.

7:44 AM · Jan 8, 2021

76.1K Retweets **109.2K** Quote Tweets **609.9K** Likes

4. For years, Twitter had resisted calls both internal and external to ban Trump on the grounds that blocking a world leader from the platform or removing their controversial tweets would hide important information that people should be able to see and debate.

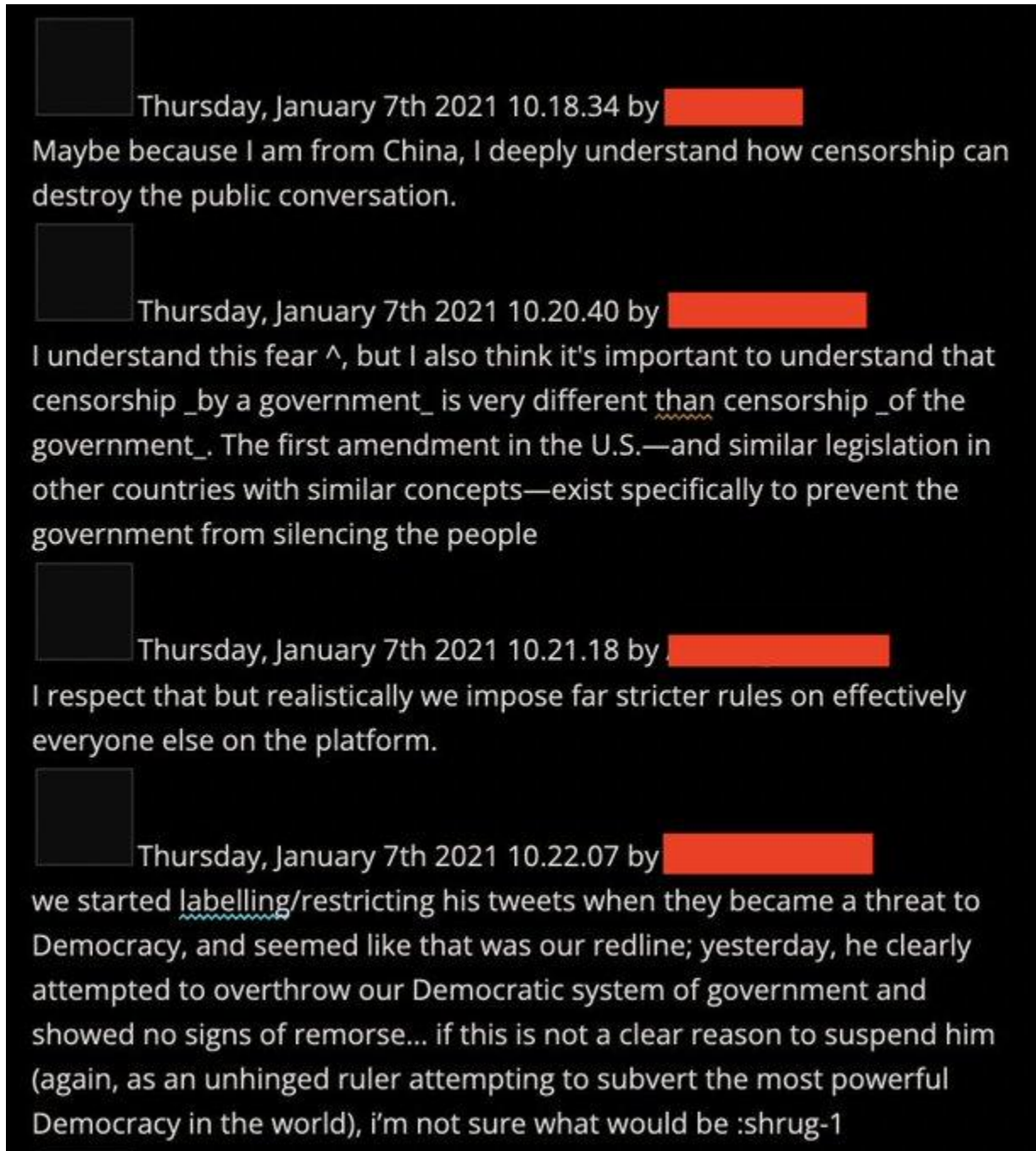
5. "Our mission is to provide a forum that enables people to be informed and to engage their leaders directly," the company wrote in 2019. Twitter's aim was to "protect the public's right to hear from their leaders and to hold them to account."

https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/company/2019/worldleaders2019

6. But after January 6, as [@mtaibbi](#) and [@shellenbergermd](#) have documented, pressure grew, both inside and outside of Twitter, to ban Trump.

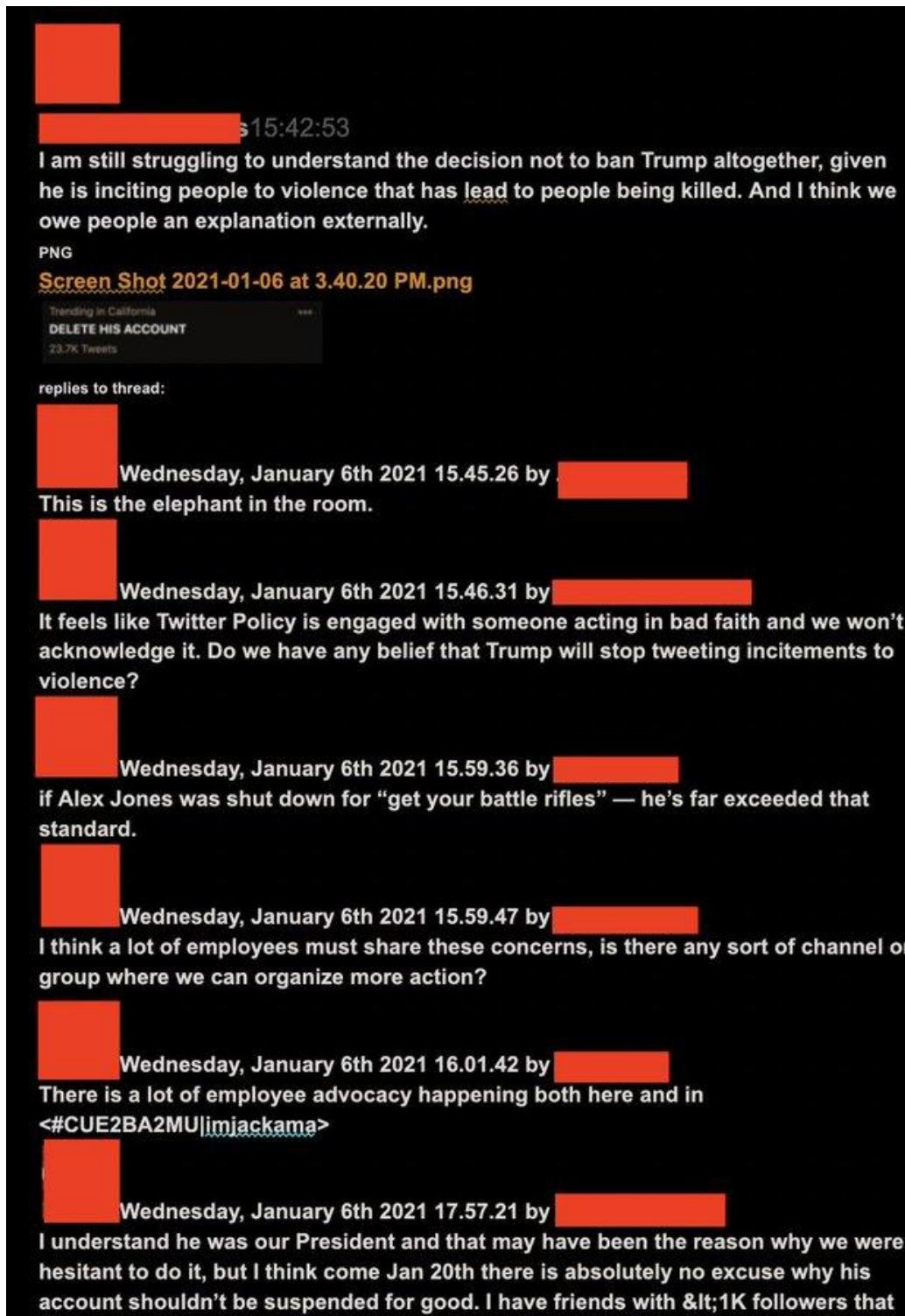
7. There were dissenters inside Twitter.

“Maybe because I am from China,” said one employee on January 7, “I deeply understand how censorship can destroy the public conversation.”



8. But voices like that one appear to have been a distinct minority within the company. Across Slack channels, many Twitter employees were upset that Trump hadn't been banned earlier.

9. After January 6, Twitter employees organized to demand their employer ban Trump. "There is a lot of employee advocacy happening," said one Twitter employee.



10. "We have to do the right thing and ban this account," said one staffer.

It's "pretty obvious he's going to try to thread the needle of incitement without violating the rules," said another.

Friday, January 8th 2021 07.49.24 by [redacted] n
That last sentence... We have to do the right thing here and ban this account.
That last sentence... We have to do the right thing here and ban this account.
That last sentence... We have to do the right thing here and ban this account.
(Edited)
Edited: Friday, January 8th 2021 07.49.25

Friday, January 8th 2021 07.50.23 by [redacted]
we don't have a good track record of acting on his account except in the
clearest and most explicit of cases and even then...

Friday, January 8th 2021 08.29.47 by [redacted]
imo extraordinary circumstances demand extraordinary leadership

Friday, January 8th 2021 08.31.10 by [redacted]
it took 3 yrs but i've lost faith

[redacted] 07:13:06
Actual votes: Donald Trump Republican Party 232 46.9% 74,223,744

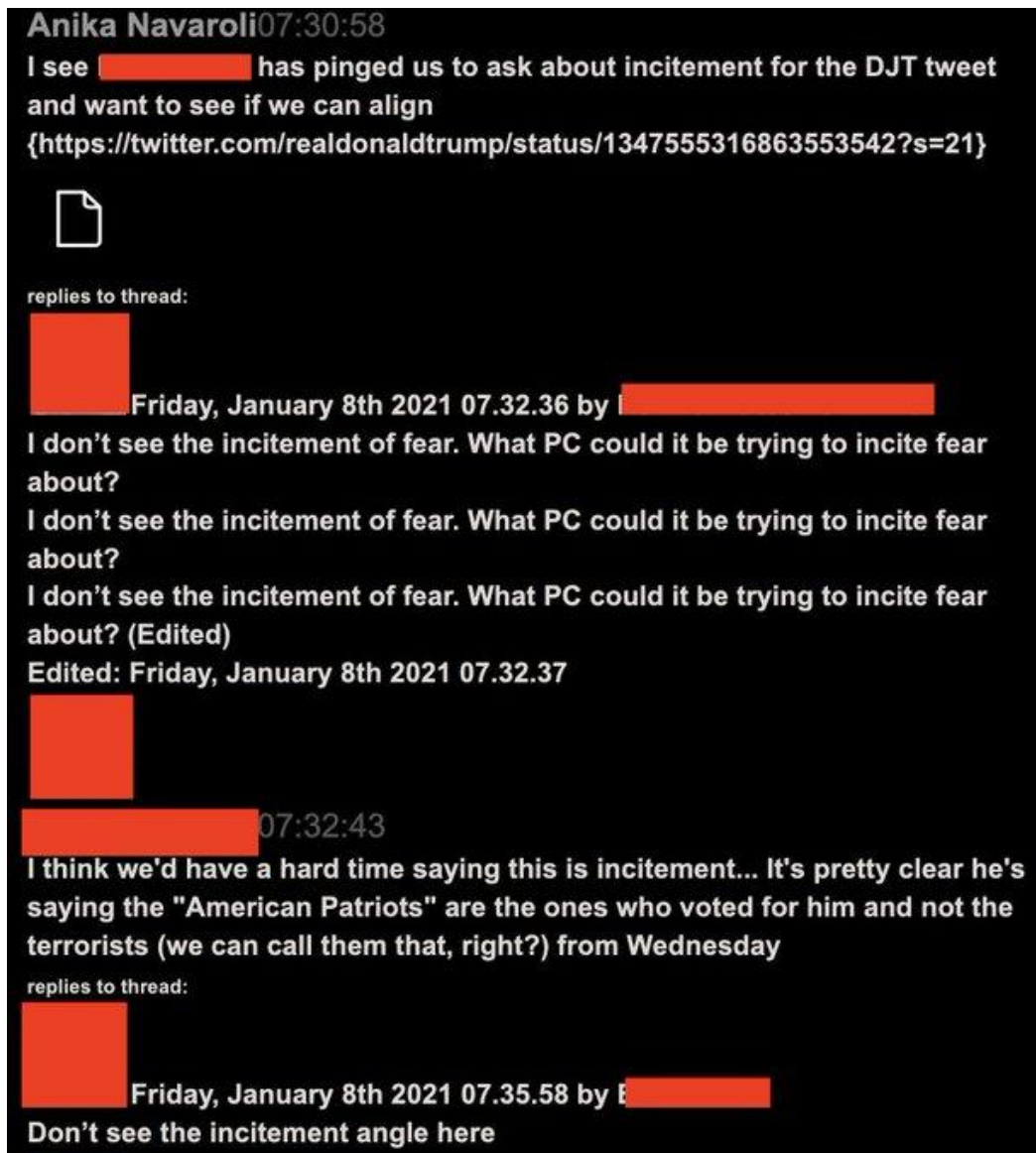
[redacted] 07:13:17
second this^ its pretty obvious he's going to try to thread the needle of incitement
while not violating the rules

11. In the early afternoon of January 8, The Washington Post published an open letter signed by over 300 Twitter employees to CEO Jack Dorsey demanding Trump's ban. "We must examine Twitter's complicity in what President-Elect Biden has rightly termed insurrection."


12. But the Twitter staff assigned to evaluate tweets quickly concluded that Trump had **not** violated Twitter's policies. "I think we'd have a hard time saying this is incitement," wrote one staffer.

13. "It's pretty clear he's saying the 'American Patriots' are the ones who voted for him and not the terrorists (we can call them that, right?) from Wednesday."


14. Another staffer agreed: "Don't see the incitement angle here."




15. "I also am not seeing clear or coded incitement in the DJT tweet," wrote Anika Navaroli, a Twitter policy official. "I'll respond in the elections channel and say that our team has assessed and found no vios"—or violations—"for the DJT one."



Anika Navaroli07:33:20
I also am not seeing clear or coded incitement in the DJT tweet




Anika Navaroli07:34:08
I'll respond in the elections channel and say that our team has assessed and found no vios for the DJT one




[Redacted]07:40:38
Flagging that Yoel is
{<https://twitter.slack.com/archives/G01J5F71DV0/p1610120352063000>} |
looking for an assessment of the DJT Tweet in the HP DC crisis channel.

16. She does just that: "as an fyi, Safety has assessed the DJT Tweet above and determined that there is no violation of our policies at this time."



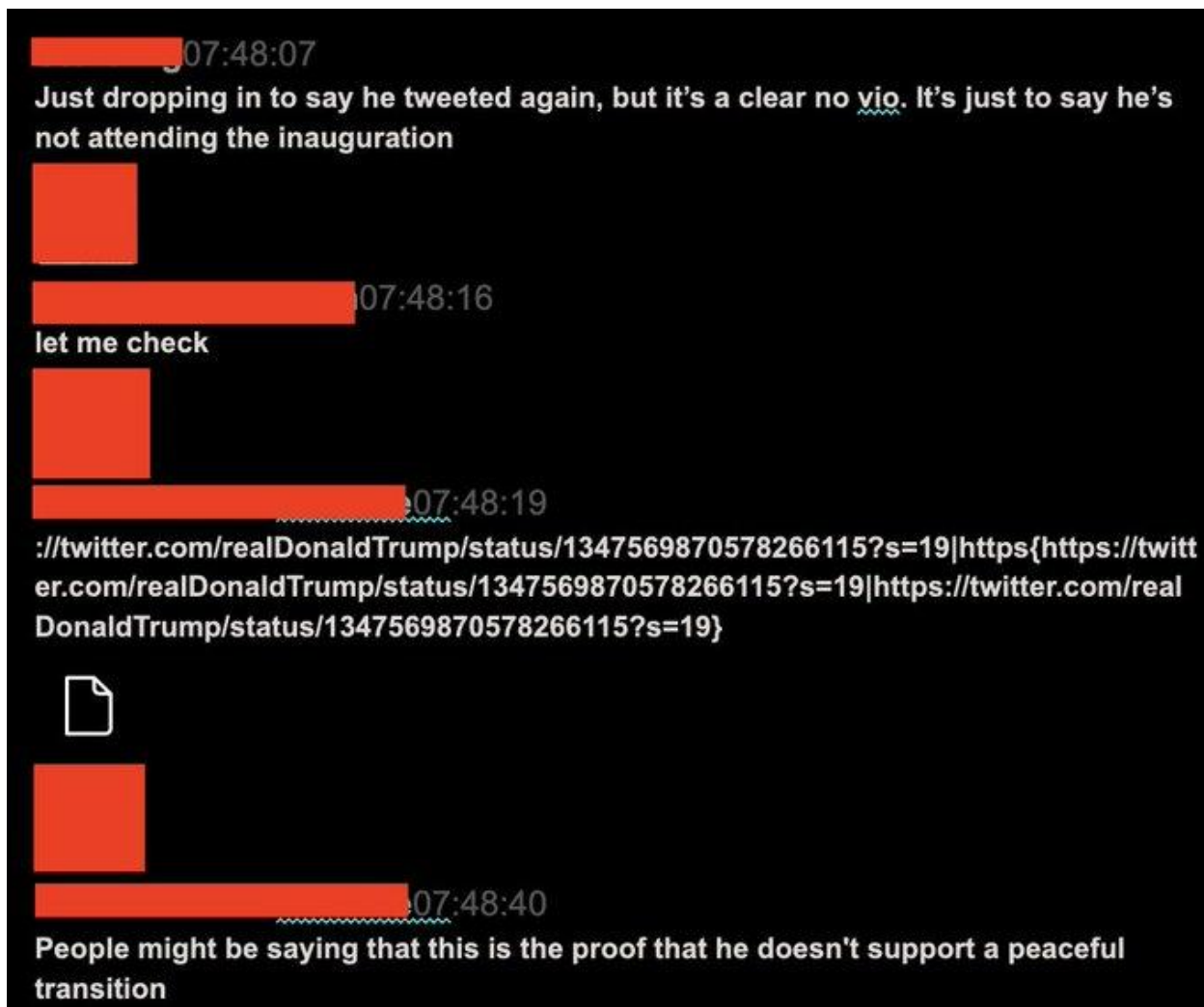
Friday, January 8th 2021 07:17:51 by **[Redacted]**
sorry I stepped out for a while. Let me know Yoel if any action will be taken



Anika Navaroli07:34:50
as an fyi, Safety has assessed the DJT Tweet above and determined that there is no violation of our policies at this time

17. (Later, Navaroli would testify to the House Jan. 6 committee: “For months I had been begging and anticipating and attempting to raise the reality that if nothing—if we made no intervention into what I saw occurring, people were going to die.”)

18. Next, Twitter’s safety team decides that Trump’s 7:44 am ET tweet is also not in violation. They are unequivocal: “it’s a clear no vio. It’s just to say he’s not attending the inauguration”



19. To understand Twitter’s decision to ban Trump, we must consider how Twitter deals with other heads of state and political leaders, including in Iran, Nigeria, and Ethiopia.

20. In June 2018, Iran’s Ayatollah Ali Khamenei tweeted, “#Israel is a malignant cancerous tumor in the West Asian region that has to be removed and eradicated: it is possible and it will happen.”

Twitter neither deleted the tweet nor banned the Ayatollah.



Khamenei.ir
@khamenei_ir



Our stance against Israel is the same stance we have always taken. [#Israel](#) is a malignant cancerous tumor in the West Asian region that has to be removed and eradicated: it is possible and it will happen. 7/31/91
[#GreatReturnMarch](#)

10:49 AM · Jun 3, 2018

3,487 Retweets **5,699** Quote Tweets **9,854** Likes

21. In October 2020, the former Malaysian Prime Minister said it was “a right” for Muslims to “kill millions of French people.”

Twitter deleted his tweet for “glorifying violence,” but he remains on the platform. The tweet below was taken from the Wayback Machine:



Dr Mahathir Mohamad
@chedetofficial

Follow

12. Muslims have a right to be angry and to kill millions of French people for the massacres of the past.

3:47 AM - 29 Oct 2020

273 Retweets **383** Likes



967

273

383

22. Muhammadu Buhari, the President of Nigeria, incited violence against pro-Biafra groups. "Those of us in the fields for 30 months, who went through the war," he wrote, "will treat them in the language they understand."

Twitter deleted the tweet but didn't ban Buhari.

23. In October 2021, Twitter allowed Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to call on citizens to take up arms against the Tigray region.

Twitter allowed the tweet to remain up, and did not ban the prime minister.



Abiy Ahmed Ali  
@AbiyAhmedAli



This Tweet violated the Twitter Rules about abusive behavior. However, Twitter has determined that it may be in the public's interest for the Tweet to remain accessible. [Learn more](#)

ሆነው ኢትዮጵያ ላይ የተከፈተውን ጥቃት ለመመከት በሁሉም ግንባሮች ተሰልፏል። ጠላት የመጨረሻ አቅሙን አሟጥጦ ለማጥቃት የሚያደርገውን ጥረት ሠራዊታችን በምድርና በአየር እየታገዘ እንዳይነሳ አድርጎ እየሰበረው ይገኛል።

በሦስቱ ግንባሮች እንደሚኖረው የተገነዘበው አሸባሪው ሕወሐት፣ ሰሞኑን ያለ የሌላ ኃይሉን ሀገርን ከጥቃት የመከላከል ኃላፊነት የጥቂቶች ሳይሆን የሁላችንም ነው። እያንዳንዱ ዜጋ ከእኔ ምን ይጠበቃል? እኔ ምን እያደረኩ ነው? ማለት አለበት። የእሱ ደህንነት እንዲጠበቅ፣ እሱ ሰላም ውሎ እንዲያደር፣ ሠርቶ እንዲያተርፍ ለእሱ ሲሉ ሌሎች የሚሰውበት ምክንያት የለም። ሁሉም ከወዙ ጨልፎ፣ ከደሙ ቀንሶና ከአጥንቱ ፈልጦ በሚያተበረክተው አስተዋጽኦ ነው ሀገር ነፍስ ኖሯት።

አይቀርም። የጠላት የጥንካሬ ምንጭ የእኛ ድክመትና መዘናጋት እንደሆነ እውቀን ነቅተንና ተባብረን ልንጠብቀው ይገባል። ብዛታችን ጥንካሬ የሚሆነው ተግባብተን በአንድነት ስንቆም ነው። መነጣጠላችን ለጠላት ይመቻል። በሚነዛው ፕሮፓጋንዳ መረባረብን እሱን ካልሆነ በቀር ማንንም አይጠቅምም። እርስ በእርሳችን መደማመጥና መተባበር ከቻልን መፍረክረክ የጀመረ የጠላት የቀደምት እያቶችንን የጀግንነት ፈላግ በመከተል ማንኛውንም እኩይ ተግባር ማክሸፍ እንደምንችል ማመን አለብን። አሁን የገጠሙን ፈተናዎች የማይታለፉ እና ውስብስብ ሊመሰሉ ይችላሉ። ነገር ግን ቀደምቶቻችን ካዩት መከራ የሚከብዱ አይደሉም። ቁልፉ ጉዳይ በአንድነት መቆም፣ በጥሞና መደማመጥ እና ተቀናጅቶ መንቀሳቀስ ናቸው። ይኼን ካደረግን የቀደመው ትውልድ

24. In early February 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government threatened to arrest Twitter employees in India, and to incarcerate them for up to seven years after they restored hundreds of accounts that had been critical of him.

Twitter did not ban Modi.

Twitter Blocks Accounts in India as Modi Pressures Social Media

The platform's problems in the country offer a stark example of the difficulty of adhering to its free-speech principles amid government worries over its influence.

25. But Twitter executives did ban Trump, even though key staffers said that Trump had not incited violence—not even in a “coded” way.

26. Less than 90 minutes after Twitter employees had determined that Trump's tweets were not in violation of Twitter policy, Vijaya Gadde—Twitter's Head of Legal, Policy, and Trust—asked whether it could, in fact, be “coded incitement to further violence.”



Vijaya Gadde09:11:01

Thanks. The biggest question is whether a tweet like the one this morning from Trump, which isn't a rule violation on its face, is being used as coded incitement to further violence



Vijaya Gadde09:11:25

If you have any context or insight we should consider, I'm all ears



Vijaya Gadde09:13:05

Eg use of term "American Patriots" and "They will not be disrespected or treated unfairly in any way, shape or form!!!"



[Redacted]09:15:49

This is an interesting question. I am going to speak with my team ASAP to see if we can run a quick survey to get reactions to the language contained in the tweet and get back to you



Vijaya Gadde09:16:45

I'm not sure I would rely on a survey...i worry about how that would be perceived externally.



Vijaya Gadde09:17:16

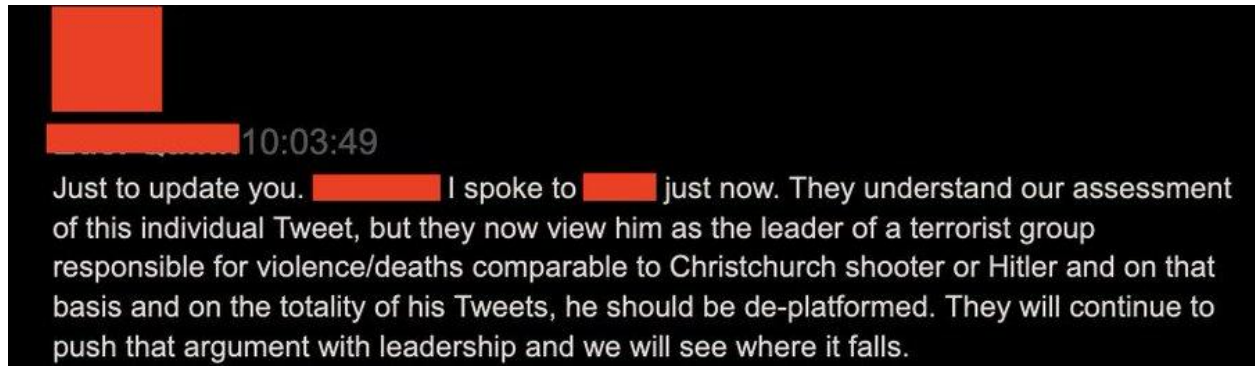
Wondering if we have anything in past research that could be relevant

27. A few minutes later, Twitter employees on the “scaled enforcement team” suggest that Trump’s tweet may have violated Twitter’s Glorification of Violence policy—if you interpreted the phrase “American Patriots” to refer to the rioters.



28. Things escalate from there.

Members of that team came to “view him as the leader of a terrorist group responsible for violence/deaths comparable to Christchurch shooter or Hitler and on that basis and on the totality of his Tweets, he should be de-platformed.”

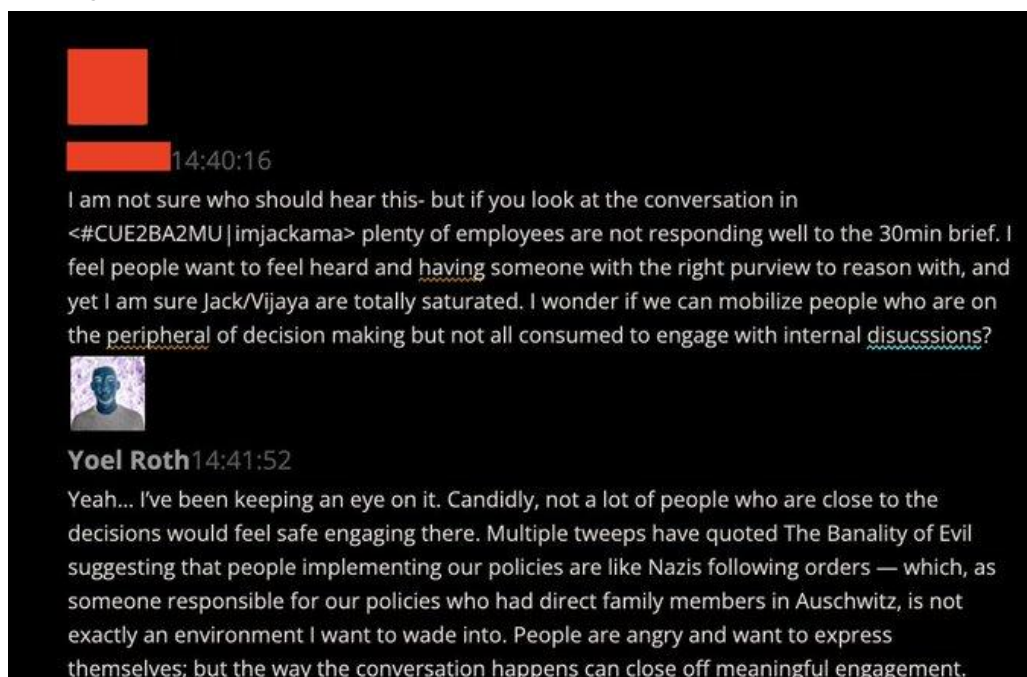


29. Two hours later, Twitter executives host a 30-minute all-staff meeting.

Jack Dorsey and Vijaya Gadde answer staff questions as to why Trump wasn't banned yet.

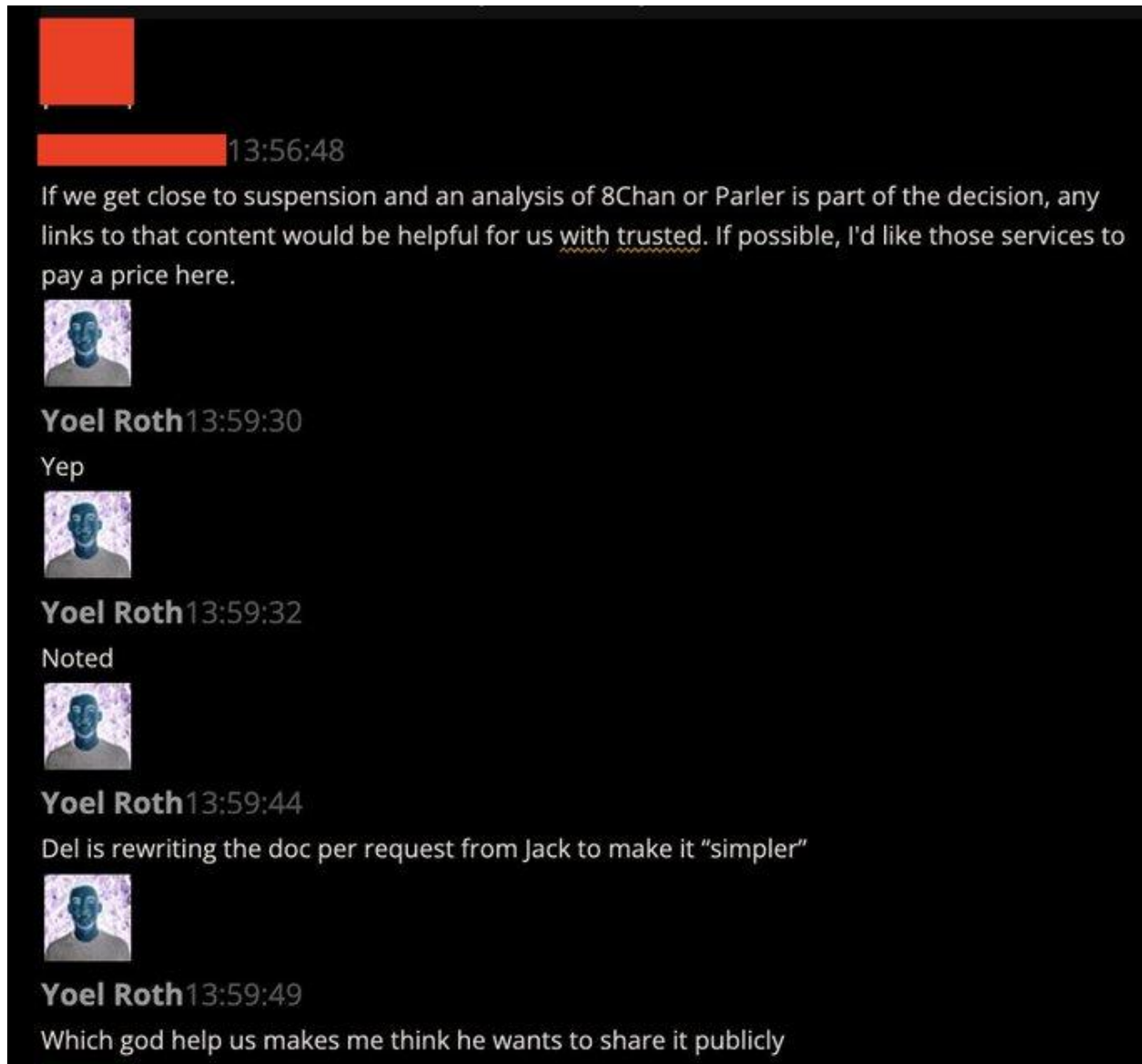
But they make some employees angrier.

30. “Multiple tweeps [Twitter employees] have quoted the Banality of Evil suggesting that people implementing our policies are like Nazis following orders,” relays Yoel Roth to a colleague.




31. Dorsey requested simpler language to explain Trump's suspension.

Roth wrote, "god help us [this] makes me think he wants to share it publicly"




[Redacted] 13:56:48


If we get close to suspension and an analysis of 8Chan or Parler is part of the decision, any links to that content would be helpful for us with trusted. If possible, I'd like those services to pay a price here.

 **Yoel Roth** 13:59:30


Yep

 **Yoel Roth** 13:59:32

Noted

 **Yoel Roth** 13:59:44

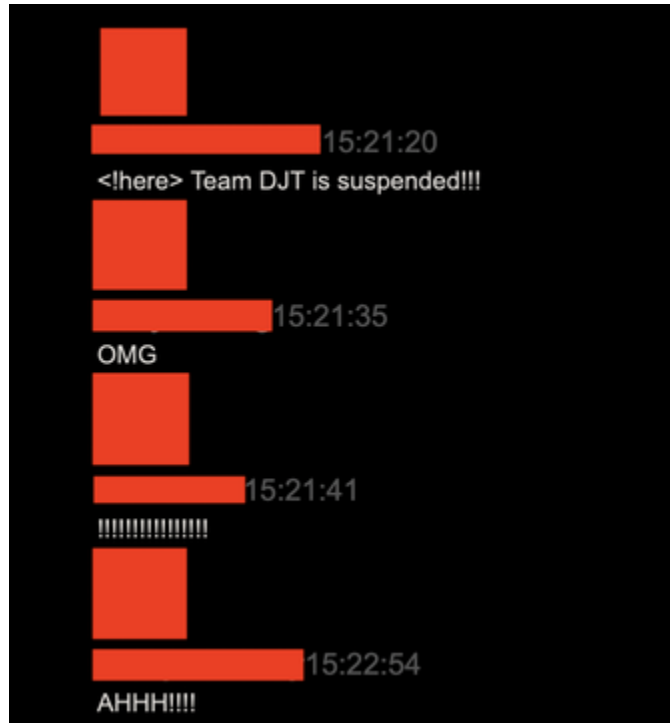
Del is rewriting the doc per request from Jack to make it "simpler"

 **Yoel Roth** 13:59:49

Which god help us makes me think he wants to share it publicly

31. Dorsey requested simpler language to explain Trump's suspension.

Roth wrote, "god help us [this] makes me think he wants to share it publicly"



34. And congratulatory: "big props to whoever in trust and safety is sitting there whack-a-mole-ing these trump accounts"



18:39:55

big props to whoever in trust and safety is sitting there whack-a-mole-ing these trump accounts



18:41:11

can we get them one of these awesome cards I've heard about

replies to thread:



Friday, January 8th 2021 18:46:35 by [redacted]

definitely some extraordinary acts of awesomeness going on around twitter right now



18:41:14

Don Jr's account needs to be locked too

35. By the next day, employees expressed eagerness to tackle “medical misinformation” as soon as possible:

^ what [REDACTED] said. Yes, we absolutely plan to do this in 2021 - with the timeline being “as soon as possible.” COVID is one specific disease; medical misinformation is a much broader category of harmful content. We’ve laid a lot of the groundwork for policy and product behavior through our work on COVID and the election; the Misinfo Policy team in T&S, along with the folks in Health Experience, TwS, Research, and other teams across the company are now focused on getting to a place of improved maturity in how our policies are actualized (across reporting, operations, global scale, scope, etc). We’ll have more to share on this soon! (Edited)

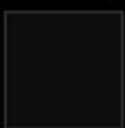
Edited: Saturday, January 9th 2021 09.30.06



Saturday, January 9th 2021 11.43.27 by [REDACTED]

Thank you!

36. “For the longest time, Twitter’s stance was that we aren’t the arbiter of truth,” wrote another employee, “which I respected but never gave me a warm fuzzy feeling.”



Monday, January 11th 2021 15.02.15 by [REDACTED]

Very excited to see us handling more categories of misinformation. For the longest time, Twitter’s stance was that we aren’t the arbiter of truth which I respected but never gave me a warm fuzzy feeling. That said, my dad is an MD (to give context) and medical misinformation is a really hard topic. Even for COVID-19 we only covered a narrow category of information. As an example is “Take vitamin C, vitamin D, elderberry, and xylitol with GSE daily to reduce covid-19 risk” good information, creative marketing, or misinformation? Personally, I’m not sure and I suspect there are views on both sides.

37. But Twitter’s COO Parag Agrawal—who would later succeed Dorsey as CEO—told Head of Security Mudge Zatko: “I think a few of us should brainstorm the ripple effects” of Trump’s ban. Agrawal added: “centralized content moderation IMO has reached a breaking point now.”



Parag Agrawal 16:08:43

I think a few of us should brainstorm the ripple effects, and potential fragmentation of public conversation



Parag Agrawal 16:08:54

and how we might adapt



Mudge Zatko 16:15:32

Who are you suggesting?



Parag Agrawal 16:16:31

not sure, a few of us on staff maybe to start



Parag Agrawal 16:17:04

the future of public conversation feels uncertain to me.



Parag Agrawal 16:18:04

to my mind, we need to move fast towards opening up control over policies and enforcement and decentralizing it. centralized content moderation IMO has reached a breaking point now.



16:15:13

interested to hear what people think now that its played out the way it has ...



Parag Agrawal 16:19:39

i think more imp question now is the future of public conversation. in my mind, this is the end of the road for centralized content moderation — hard to believe that this approach will be sustainable moving forward.



Parag Agrawal 16:24:09

suggested to mudge that a few of us get together to anticipate ripple effects and decide on how we want to mobilize for the change ahead

38. Outside the United States, Twitter's decision to ban Trump raised alarms, including with French President Emmanuel Macron, German Prime Minister Angela Merkel, and Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

39. Macron told an audience he didn't "want to live in a democracy where the key decisions" were made by private players. "I want it to be decided by a law voted by your representative, or by regulation, governance, democratically discussed and approved by democratic leaders."

40. Merkel's spokesperson called Twitter's decision to ban Trump from its platform "problematic" and added that the freedom of opinion is of "elementary significance."

Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny criticized the ban as "an unacceptable act of censorship."

41. Whether you agree with Navalny and Macron or the executives at Twitter, we hope this latest installment of [#TheTwitterFiles](#) gave you insight into that unprecedented decision.

42. From the outset, our goal in investigating this story was to discover and document the steps leading up to the banning of Trump and to put that choice into context.

43. Ultimately, the concerns about Twitter's efforts to censor news about Hunter Biden's laptop, blacklist disfavored views, and ban a president aren't about the past choices of executives in a social media company.

44. They're about the power of a handful of people at a private company to influence the public discourse and democracy.

45. This was reported by [@ShellenbergerMD](#), [@IsaacGrafstein](#), [@SnoozyWeiss](#), [@Olivia_Reingold](#), [@petersavodnik](#), [@NellieBowles](#). Follow all of our work at The Free Press: [@TheFP](#)

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