

Israeli ministers approve 'Facebook bill' banning terrorist content

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Jerusalem: Ministers in Israel have approved a bill - dubbed the "Facebook bill" - that seeks to compel social media providers such as Facebook, Twitter or YouTube to immediately remove contents from their platforms that the Israeli courts consider incitements that could lead to violence or terrorism.

The bill that would apply to posts that "call for an act of violence or terrorism" passed a Ministerial Committee for Legislation vote on Sunday, The Jerusalem Post reported on Sunday.

Facebook and other social networking platforms such as Twitter currently remove contents related to hate speech, violence and terrorism on government requests but they are not required everywhere to act immediately and remove all posts.

"Israel is not the first country in the world to pass [such a] law. There's similar legislation in various states in the US, in Canada, Australia, and the UK," the Post quoted Adam Snukal, IP and technology shareholder in the Tel Aviv office of international law firm Greenberg Traurig, LLP as saying.

"Incitement leads to terrorism, but Facebook and other social media companies do not respond to all of the police's requests to remove such content, or take a long time to do so," Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan noted.

If the bill, which has raised concerns about restrictions on free speech, becomes a law, social media providers would no longer have such liberty of judging the merit of each request in Israel.

According to the bill, the state would be able to seek court orders to remove content without giving the social-media platform advance notice, based on classified evidence or evidence that would not be considered admissible in other cases.

Social media platforms are also doing their bit to make the removal of online terrorists content more effective.

To help enforce policies against online terrorist content, internet giants Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube earlier said they were creating a shared database to help enforce policies against online terrorist content.

"Just this month, Facebook, along with other US tech companies, announced the creation of a shared industry database of 'hashes' - unique digital 'fingerprints' - of violent terrorist videos or images, to enable us to act on such content even more quickly," a representative of Facebook in Israel was quoted as saying.

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