

Twitter Allows Iran's Supreme Leader to Keep Posting His Annihilationist Threats

by Hugh Fitzgerald



While Twitter allowed the rapper Wiley to post his antisemitic rants, and [only banned him](#) from the platform after a widespread boycott of Twitter was underway, it has been consistently solicitous of another, much more dangerous antisemite, the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

The story is [here](#).

A Twitter official on Wednesday informed Israeli lawmakers that tweets in which Iranian officials, in particular Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, pledge to eradicate the Jewish state are not in violation of the social media

giant's rules against hate speech.

Ylwa Pettersson, Twitter's head policy for the Nordic countries and Israel said that such posts are considered mere "foreign policy saber-rattling."

Is it mere "foreign policy saber rattling" to repeatedly call for the complete destruction of the Jewish state and the murder, or expulsion, of its Jewish inhabitants? "Foreign policy sabre-rattling" occurs when, for example, Turkish President Erdogan threatens to push the Kurds in northern Syria all the way south to the Iraqi border, or when President Putin warns the Ukraine that "Russia will fight to keep the Crimea," or when General El-Sisi warns that Egyptian troops will enter Libya if the GNA (Government of National Accord) forces, with Turkish help, push east beyond Sirte. No genocidal threats of any kind: Erdogan does not announce his troops will kill all the Kurds. Putin does not threaten to "destroy" the Ukraine and all of its inhabitants; El-Sisi does not threaten to annihilate all the Libyans supporting the GNA. The Supreme Leader's tweets about Israel are very different. He is not merely sabre-rattling, but expressing, on many occasions, his genocidal desire to destroy not just the Jewish state, but the men, women, and children in Israel.

Khamenei has compared Israel to a "cancerous tumor" and to the coronavirus, and he has called for the nation to be "uprooted and destroyed." The ayatollah, who wields complete control over the regime, made similar comments on July 22 in an in-person speech.

"Some argue that the Zionist regime is a reality that the region must come to terms with," Khamenei said in one tweet. "Today the #Covid_19 is a reality; should it be accepted or fought?! The long-lasting virus of Zionism will be uprooted thanks to the determination and faith of the youth. #Covid1948." You do not merely shrink "a cancerous tumor," but

must eliminate it altogether; the same is true for the coronavirus, which must be eradicated by means of a vaccine. Khamenei means for us to understand that the size of the “Zionist state” does not matter; he implies that even were Israel to be squeezed back within the 1949 armistice lines, that would still leave the “cancer” of a Jewish state within the Muslim body politic. And that is why they need not merely to be reduced in size, but completely eliminated.

Twitter’s rules on terrorism and violent extremism state: “There is no place on Twitter for ... individuals who affiliate with and promote [terrorist group’s] illicit activities. ... Our assessments in this context are informed by national and international terrorism designations.”

Ayatollah Khamenei, and Iran, support with weapons and financing the terror group Hezbollah. The U.S., Great Britain, Germany, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and many other countries, as well as the E.U. as a whole, now have recognized both wings – political and military – of Hezbollah as part of one terror group, and all Hezbollah activities are banned in those countries. Meanwhile, Iran is the sole backer of Hezbollah, and has supplied it with 140,000 missiles and rockets, which Hezbollah has hidden all over southern Lebanon and southern Beirut, for use against Israel in some future war. Iran also has been supplying Hezbollah with large amounts of money; until Iran’s current financial troubles began, Ayatollah Khamenei was giving the terror group \$800 million a year. Doesn’t that clearly show that Ayatollah Khamenei, according to Twitter’s own rules, is an “individual who affiliates with and promotes terrorist groups [Hezbollah] illicit activities”? What more evidence does one need than the 140,000 missiles Iran has supplied to Hezbollah, and the \$800 million a year subsidy that Khamenei has also been sending to Hezbollah, a recognized terror group? Apparently that’s not enough for Twitter. What would it take to have Twitter ban the Supreme Leader?

"We have an approach toward leaders that says that direct interactions with fellow public figures, comments on political issues of the day, or foreign policy saber-rattling on military-economic issues are generally not in violation of our rules," Pettersson was quoted by the Times of Israel as telling the Knesset's Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs, via video-conference.

"Calling for genocide on Twitter is okay, but commenting on the political situation in certain countries is not okay?" asked Blue and White MK Michal Cotler-Wunsh, to which Pettersson reportedly replied, "If a world leader violates our rules but there is a clear interest in keeping that up on the service we may place it behind a notice that provides some more context about the violation and allows people to click through if they wish to see that type of content."

"Wow. Twitter just admitted that tweets calling genocide against Jews by Iranian leaders DON'T violate its policy!", Cotler-Wunsh tweeted after the session ended. "This is a double standard. This is antisemitism."

A spokesperson for Twitter later said that tweets the likes of which are posted by Khamenei "are not in violation of our policies," pointing to the company's policy according to which "foreign policy saber-rattling on economic or military issues are generally not in violation of the Twitter Rules."

The genocidal threats of Khamenei don't violate Twitter's policy because, according to Twitter, they constitute mere "foreign policy saber-rattling on military or economic issues." Would Tweeter feel the same if President Trump posted on Tweeter threats to wipe Iran from the face of the earth, and kill or expel every last Iranian? Would the resultant outcry lead it to conclude that this went beyond mere "foreign policy saber-rattling on military matters"? I'm sure it would. I'm convinced that Twitter would take down such posts very

quickly, announcing that “these are genocidal threats, beyond all rational discussion and serving no useful purpose for public debate. Twitter will not tolerate such a use of its platform, and such tweets, even if by the President, have been and will continue to be promptly taken down.”

But when it comes to Israel, a foreign leader’s repeated threat to destroy the entire country of Israel and eradicate its Jewish citizens – though it certainly “serves no useful purpose for public debate” – is just fine for Tweeter. It meets the company’s standard of merely being “foreign policy saber rattling on military issues.” So that’s all it is! From Ayatollah Khomeini, and Mahmoud Ahmedinajad, to Ayatollah Khamenei, issuing their threats against Israel, it’s all been mere “saber-rattling.” The nuclear project, that Iran has continued to pursue despite its many setbacks and the sanctions it has incurred, and the medium-range ballistic missiles it has built, that could potentially be armed with nuclear warheads – well, Twitter thinks there is nothing to worry about, because when the Supreme Leader tweets that Israel should be destroyed, the Ayatollah doesn’t mean it. He’s engaging, Twitter knows (from the profound study of Twelver-Shi’ism undertaken by its executives), not in a real threat, but only in mere “foreign-policy saber-rattling.” That should calm the Israelis down considerably.

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