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Facebook sanctions Netanyahu webpage staffer's mistake over hate speech violation

Facebook sanctions Netanyahu page over hate speech violation

The social network says it had suspended the bot connected to the prime minister account for 24 hours after an inflammatory post, allegedly unauthorized, claiming 'all Arabs want to destroy us' appeared on his page

Associated Press, Ynet|Published: 09.12.19 , 14:16

Facebook says it has sanctioned the page of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu because of a violation of the company's hate speech policy after an inflammatory post aimed against Israel's Arab population appeared on his official social media page.

Facebook said on Thursday that the social network had suspended for 24 hours the page's bot, or automated chat function.

The page had called on voters to prevent the establishment of a government composed of "Arabs who want to destroy us all - women, children and men." The post sparked uproar by opposition politicians.

Netanyahu denied he wrote the post in an interview with Kan Reshet Bet radio. He said it was a staffer's mistake and the post was removed.

Joint List leader Ayman Odeh said his party had appealed to Facebook in order to have the post taken down.

Netanyahu is fighting for his political survival ahead of elections next week and has been shoring up nationalist voters with feisty language and hard-line promises.

09.12.19 Report in May of 2018.

Former FBI & others conclude listening devices monitor White House cell phones

Report: U.S. believes Israel planted listening devices near White House

Politico says devices that mimicked cell phone towers also placed in other 'sensitive locations' around Washington; Israeli officials vehemently deny claims, calling report 'blatant lie'

Ynet and i24NEWS|Published: 09.12.19 , 14:05

The United States believes Israel is responsible for planting listening devices near the White House and in other "sensitive" spots in the U.S. capital, Politico reported Thursday, citing "three former senior U.S. officials with knowledge of the matter."

Israel vehemently denied the report, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office called a "blatant lie."

Politico said that the listening devices, known as "StingRays," monitor cell phone activity by imitating normal cell phone towers and fooling cell phones into providing data on the location and identity of the users.

The FBI and other agencies came to the conclusion that Israel was behind the espionage, based on forensic evidence, the former officials told Politico.

The report cited one former official as saying that the devices were likely meant to spy on President Donald Trump, his senior aides and other close associates.

Politico quoted an ex-senior intelligence official as saying that, "It was pretty clear that the Israelis were responsible."

According to the report, Israel has not faced any consequences from the U.S. for the alleged espionage.

Politico said that the president has been notoriously careless in security protocols, such as failing to use a secured cell phone, and cited his denial of a New York Times report in October 2018 that Chinese spies were tapping his calls.

The president said the Times report was “so incorrect I do not have time here to correct it.”

At that point, Politico said, officials at the Department of **Homeland Security** (DHS) had already **uncovered evidence of the "StingRays"** around Washington, D.C., **but was unable to peg their specific source.**

The findings were apparently relayed to relevant federal agencies, Politico **reported**, based on a letter by top DHS official Christopher Krebs to Senator Ron Wyden of (D-OR) **in May of 2018.**

The article quotes Israeli Embassy spokesperson Elad Strohmayer as denying that Israel was behind the surveillance devices.

"These allegations are absolute nonsense," Strohmayer told Politico. "Israel doesn't conduct espionage operations in the United States, period."

Foreign Minister Israel Katz also denied the claims Thursday, echoing Strohmayer by saying that, "Israel does not conduct any spying operations in the United States."

The Prime Minister's Office also said that it was Israeli government policy not to spy on the U.S.

"There is a longstanding commitment, and a **directive from the Israeli government not to engage in any intelligence operations in the U.S.** This directive is strictly enforced without exception," Netanyahu's office said.

09.12.19

Gaza rockets are forcing Israel plan to overthrow Hamas in the Gaza Strip

Netanyahu says no choice but to overthrow Hamas

Speaking ahead of his flight to Russia, the prime minister says Israel will embark on a **widescale campaign in Gaza** but it **will not happen until the country is ready**; 'I don't base my policy on tweets,' he says

Ynet|Published: **09.12.19** , 10:16

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday said there's no other option but “to overthrow the **Hamas regime**” in the **Gaza Strip.**

Dozens of rockets have been fired into southern Israel by the militant groups in Gaza, one of which was **aimed at the city of Ashdod during Netanyahu's election conference speech,** **prompting his security personnel to rush him off the stage.**

"It looks like there will be **no other choice but to embark on a wide scale campaign (in Gaza)**," Netanyahu said in an interview with Kan Reshet Bet Radio shortly before his flight to Sochi, where he is expected to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin for the first time since 2015.

"There **will be a military operation** but I will only launch it **when we are ready** and not a minute earlier. I don't base my policy on tweets," said the prime minister.

The statement is similar to the remarks Netanyahu during election campaign in 2009, just weeks after the 2008 Gaza war, known as Operation Cast Lead. "We need action to remove the threat. There is only one way to do that - **overthrow the Hamas regime in Gaza,**" he said in a speech in the city of Ashkelon 10 years ago.

The prime minister also said he wasn't fazed by the rocket alert sirens during his speech in Ashdod despite immediately being taken to safety by his security guards. "I was calm and collected, I spoke quietly to the people in the audience and told them to evacuate," Netanyahu said.

"I was in the Kirya (IDF headquarters base in Tel Aviv) during Operation Protective Edge. Once I was even talking to Obama, I told him 'I'm sorry, I have to stop, we're going down to the bomb shelter'".

Netanyahu also said it would be "absurd" if he remained on stage despite the sirens alerting of an incoming rocket. "I wouldn't stand there like some kind of macho, telling everyone to stand still with me so we can all get hit by a missile," he said.

"I acted in accordance with the Shin Bet protocol, that's what you should do in these situations ... anyone who tells you otherwise is being irresponsible," Netanyahu said, referring to Blue and White leader Benny Gantz praise for Gabi Ashkenazi for remaining on stage in Ashkelon where sirens blared at the same time as in Ashdod.

Prior to his departure to Sochi, Netanyahu said the focus of his talks with Putin would be to promote the "joint goal" of removing Iranian forces from neighboring Syria.

Netanyahu and Putin have met regularly in recent years to coordinate military activities in Syria.

Netanyahu has for years argued for aggressively countering Iran's nuclear program and its regional belligerency and often takes pride in having a strong working relationship with both Putin and Trump.

However, Netanyahu's clout in Washington appeared to take a hit this week with the firing of one of his like-minded allies in the administration, National Security Adviser John Bolton, and amid reports that Trump was considering meeting with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and easing sanctions against Iran.

In his radio interview, Netanyahu defended his record.

"Where did this strong sanctions policy against Iran come from if not from the struggle that I led? Indeed, I have had influence on Trump," he said. "You can't tell the president of the United States with whom he should meet, but there is not one person who has influenced more, and continues to influence, the aggressive stance against Iran than me, and

09.11.19

Netanyahu & Putin justify annex, as when Russia took Crimea to protect people in 2014

Russia warns against annexing Jordan Valley on eve of Netanyahu-Putin meet

Moscow says implementation of plan could lead to a 'sharp escalation of tensions' in the region (and) undermine hopes for the establishment of long-awaited peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors,' highlights 'sharp negative reaction' in Arab world

AFP|Published: 09.11.19 , 22:32

MOSCOW — Russia warned on Wednesday that Benjamin Netanyahu's pledge to annex the West Bank's Jordan Valley could escalate tensions as the Israeli prime minister geared up to hold talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said it was concerned over Netanyahu's plan, saying its implementation could lead to a "sharp escalation of tensions in the region (and) undermine hopes for the establishment of long-awaited peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors."

Moscow pointed out that Netanyahu's pre-election pledge drew a "sharp negative reaction" in the Arab world and reiterated its call for direct talks between Israel and Palestinians.

Battling to win re-election in Sept. 17 polls, Netanyahu issued the deeply controversial pledge on Tuesday night, drawing firm condemnation from the Palestinians, Arab states, the United Nations and the European Union.

On Thursday, Netanyahu plans to travel to the Russian resort of Sochi for talks with Putin as he fights to continue his reign as the country's longest-serving prime minister.

"The leaders will discuss regional issues including the situation in Syria, with an emphasis on tightening the military coordination mechanisms," Netanyahu's office said on Wednesday.

The prime minister is also expected to meet with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu.

Netanyahu also met with Putin in Moscow days ahead of Israel's April 9 elections.

Putin drew strong condemnation from the West when Russia annexed the peninsula of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014.

The Russian president has brushed aside international criticism, defending the takeover of Crimea as a move to protect its Russian-speaking population.

09.11.19

Netanyahu annexation pledge dims hopes for Palestinian two-state solution

Netanyahu annexation pledge dims hopes for Palestinians

World leaders are denouncing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's call to annex parts of the West Bank with claims it would be devastating to the very essence of a two-state solution

Associated Press|Published: 09.11.19, 10:59

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's pledge to annex the heart of the West Bank if he wins re-election next week could inflame the Middle East and extinguish any remaining Palestinian hope of establishing a separate state.

Arab leaders angrily condemned Netanyahu's remarks on Tuesday, and a U.N. spokesman warned the step would be "devastating" to the prospects for a two-state solution.

Netanyahu said he would extend Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley — an area seen as the breadbasket of any Palestinian state — shortly after forming a new government and would move later to annex other Jewish settlements.

Such action would swallow up most of the West Bank territory sought by the Palestinians, leaving them with little more than isolated enclaves.

World leaders are denouncing Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's call to annex large parts of the West Bank in the event he wins the upcoming election.

Stephane Dujarric, a United Nations spokesman, said Tuesday that the organization maintains that any Israeli move to impose its administration over the Palestinian territory "would be devastating to the potential of reviving negotiations, regional peace and the very essence of a two-state solution."

The Arab League also condemned Netanyahu's remarks as "a serious development and an Israeli aggression" that, if carried out, amount to "an Israeli declaration for the end of the peace process."

Jordan's foreign minister, Ayman Safadi, said in a statement that annexation of Israel's West Bank settlements would fan the flames of conflict around the region

Israel's prime minister is vowing to begin annexing West Bank settlements if he wins national elections next week.

Tuesday's announcement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to be aimed at shoring up support of hard-line nationalist voters.

Netanyahu is in a tight race and has turned to a series of dramatic announcements in recent days as part of a frantic effort to mobilize his supporters.

Netanyahu says Israel must lay out its vision as President Donald Trump prepares to unveil his Mideast peace plan.

Annexing settlements would likely spell the end of any lingering hopes of establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Netanyahu made no mention of what he would do with the territory's more than 2 million Palestinian residents.

09.04.19

Lebanon criticises Hezbollah, for firing missiles at an IDF base on Sunday

Hezbollah facing growing criticism in Lebanon

Mainstream media, social media and politicians are becoming more vocal in their displeasure of the Iran-backed group's decision to fire missiles at an IDF base on Sunday, which resulted in a massive Israeli bombardment of a southern Lebanon town

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Criticism is growing in Lebanon over the actions of Hezbollah, the Iran-backed terror group that this week attacked an Israeli military base resulting in massive artillery fire in response.

While media outlets associated with Hezbollah were quick to report Sunday's border incident - in which Hezbollah fired anti-tank missiles at troops over the border - as a victory for Lebanon, a different position began to appear both in the mainstream media and on social media.

Criticism of the group, its leader and its Iranian benefactors have appeared with increasing frequency.

Former prime minister Fouad Siniora, who led the country during the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah, told Sky News Arabic that the Shi'ite group was entangling Lebanon in a mess and that his country needed a defense strategy.

"It is inconceivable that Hezbollah would launch such an operation," he said.

Meanwhile, a member of parliament from Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri's Future Movement party, said the Beirut government alone - and not Hezbollah - must make decisions on the country's defense policies.

Another parliamentarian accused Iran of "pulling the strings" and deciding for Lebanon when and where such escalations would take place.

"The decision to go to war is unfortunately in the hands of Hezbollah," he said.

Hariri's current coalition government includes Hezbollah, which made significant gains in last year's parliamentary elections while Hariri's bloc lost a third of its seats.

The group now holds two ministries and a ministry of state, including for the first time the Ministry of Health, which has one of the country's largest budgets. The Finance Ministry remains in the hands of a Hezbollah ally, Ali Hassan Khalil.