

Facebook, Instagram block Trump's accounts 'indefinitely'

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Washington, January 7 (RHC)-- Facebook Inc has taken the unprecedented step of blocking United States President Donald Trump's social media accounts on its platforms for the remaining 13 days of his presidency and possibly beyond, the company's CEO announced Thursday.

Facebook, which owns photo-sharing app Instagram, will also block his account there, CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote in a post the day after Trump supporters breached the U.S. Capitol building in a violent, unruly mob, forcing lawmakers to flee and the complex to be placed under lockdown for several hours.

"We believe the risks of allowing President Trump to continue to use our service during this period are simply too great, so we are extending the block we have placed on his Facebook and Instagram accounts indefinitely and for at least the next two weeks," Zuckerberg wrote in his post that explained the decision Thursday.

Lawmakers from both the Senate and the House of Representatives had gathered to certify the US election results in favour of President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, but were forced to flee when protesters entered the building after being told by Trump at a Wednesday morning rally to go to the Capitol.

At least four people died in the post-election riots at the Capitol Wednesday. So far, 52 people have been arrested in connection with the events at the Capitol, according to Washington, DC Metropolitan Police Department Chief Robert Contee.

The FBI has also asked people to submit photos, videos and tips identifying those who were inciting violence that day. Lawmakers returned to continue their work after the building was deemed safe at 8 p.m. (01:00 GMT) Wednesday, formally certifying Biden's victory in the early hours of Thursday morning.

Trump has frequently used social media platforms Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to speak directly to his followers and issue policy decisions, in contrast with former U.S. presidents. Facebook has faced criticism from lawmakers and some of its own employees in the past over how it handles disinformation related to the presidential election, as well as posts by Trump that contain falsehoods.

Zuckerberg said Facebook had "allowed President Trump to use our platform, consistent with our own rules, at times removing content or labeling his posts when they violate our policies. We did this because we believe that the public has a right to the broadest possible access to political speech, even controversial speech."

But, Zuckerberg wrote, "the current context is now fundamentally different, involving the use of our platform to incite violent insurrection against a democratically elected government."

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