

# Home Affairs Committee

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From the Committee Chair

Nicklas Berild Lundblad  
Vice-President, Public Policy  
Google

7 March 2018

Dear Mr Lundblad

I am writing to demand an immediate explanation of why YouTube is continuing to host and promote through your search engines propaganda from the proscribed far right extremist organisation National Action — despite your repeated promises to the Committee to stop it and despite me raising one particular propaganda video directly with you and your senior colleagues at least seven times.

Despite promises that this video would be removed, it is still up on YouTube. I am shocked and disturbed at YouTube's complete failure to deal with this known illegal video. It shows either hopeless incompetence or a shameful abdication of responsibility.

As you will have heard from Assistant Commissioner Mark Rowley in a valedictory speech last month, the far-right terror threat in UK is now “significant and concerning”. AC Rowley raised National Action in particular, an organisation about which the public and police should be ‘gravely concerned’.

I have directly raised with you and your senior colleagues a particular propaganda video relating to a white supremacist speech delivered at a National Action demonstration in Darlington in November 2016:

- In March 2017, the Home Affairs Select Committee contacted YouTube to ask why this video was still available on YouTube even though National Action was proscribed by the Government in December 2016. On 14 March 2017, Vice President, Communications and Public Affairs at Google EMEA, Peter Barron, told the Committee it had now been removed because “it was representing a proscribed organisation and was therefore illegal content”.
- On 17 March 2017, I wrote again to Mr Barron, as we were still able to find the same video on YouTube again three days later. In his response of 30 March, Mr Barron said in relation to National Action videos that: “As a proscribed terrorist organisation, we blocked their channel as soon as we were notified, and we block videos that invite support for National Action, including the ones flagged to us in your recent letter.”
- On 26 June 2017, I met with you at my parliamentary office where I once again raised the National Action propaganda video and the fact that it had not been properly banned from the YouTube platform.
- On 27 July 2017, I met Susan Wojcicki, CEO of Youtube, when I again showed her the video, which was still available on particular channels, and called on Youtube to

use its own search engines and technology to find the video everywhere on their platform and remove it.

- On 27 October 2017, despite these meetings and my highlighting of the issue publicly, I felt obliged to write again to Mr Barron, as National Action videos were still accessible on YouTube. In the letter, I requested “that all National Action material is removed as a matter of urgency – i.e. today – from YouTube sites, and others sites for which Google is responsible or which can be accessed via Google”.
- On 15 November 2017, I met with Kent Walker, Senior Vice President of Google. He told me that action had been taken to prevent that video being shown. While he was in my office I immediately found the video still available on YouTube and showed it to him.
- On 19 December 2017, at a Home Affairs Select Committee evidence session, I asked you why it had taken eight months to completely remove the video from YouTube. You agreed then that the delays in ensuring this was the case were “disappointing”. You stated that “as we have started to roll out our machine learning in the last six months, we have improved.”

However that same National Action video – first raised with Google almost a year ago – is still available on YouTube on at least four separate channels:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtL06wUryRU> (The Black Pill News Network)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTuaQAwV\\_5Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CTuaQAwV_5Y) (Strasserite GSWR)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vR9aOYXX020> (HyperboreanOrientation)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgjYbJlJl4> (Legion \_)

The ‘Up Next’ section of three of the videos recommends and autoplays another similar white supremacist video titled ‘Azzmador Speech – This is Our War’ on the channel JakodaRay: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZR1w9SbwCo>.

This is utterly disgraceful.

You, and your colleagues from Google, have repeatedly told me and the Committee that proscribed organisations are not allowed on your platforms; that you are getting better and quicker at removing inappropriate content; and that technology and machine-learning is improving all the time.

Yet a year on, supporters and promoters of National Action are still able to spread their dangerous and hate-filled ideologies on YouTube, and find similar content propagated by other users.

Moreover I found these videos by doing the most basic searches in YouTube's search engine - including typing in "National Action Darlington."

One of the videos on a channel that YouTube search engine found for me had been “identified by the YouTube community as inappropriate or offensive to some audiences” and therefore placed in YouTube's ‘limited state’. Your limited state is clearly failing if it permits a video that Peter Barron told us is illegal to remain on your platform and be easily offered up in response to searches, despite community reports.

It should be unnecessary to rehearse the dangers of allowing such abhorrent views a foothold on a prominent public forum, particularly as recent cases have shown the impact social media platforms can have in radicalisation.

Google is one of the highest-value organisations in the world. It creates and possesses some of the most advanced technology, and employs some of the best and brightest technological minds. I cannot believe that you are unable to prevent the upload and spread of illegal material which has been raised with you so many times.

It is frankly shocking that you are still failing to use your extensive artificial intelligence to do this or to even get a member of staff to type a few words into your search engine as we have done to make sure that the very small number of proscribed extremist organisations are at least not able to broadcast their known illegal videos on your platform.

I can therefore only assume that the continued persistence of this video on your platform is the result of incompetence or unwillingness to act on your part.

As the Committee clearly set out in its report last year, Google and YouTube must start to take their responsibilities seriously, and show greater evidence of change and improvement.

Along with other internet and technology companies, you have done good work on tackling child pornography and abuse imagery. You have said that you are doing far more on Islamist extremism. But the fact that this National Action video can reappear time and time again, while a rip-off music video will be removed immediately is, quite frankly, appalling.

I would ask that you explain immediately why this video is still available on YouTube, what concrete and practical steps Google will be taking to ensure that it cannot be uploaded again and that users are not autoplayed more and more extreme material, as well as what additional proactive measures, which this incident demonstrates are urgently needed, will be put in place.

I would be grateful for your response by Friday 9 March

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvette Cooper', written in a cursive style.

**Yvette Cooper MP**