



Written by [James Murphy](#) on September 14, 2020

Burning Down the System? Facebook Censors Claims That Antifa Is Involved in Western Wildfires

On Saturday evening, Facebook announced that it would be removing “false claims” that Antifa may be responsible for setting some of the wildfires that are currently ravaging the western United States.

Despite the anarchist group’s penchant for setting fires during the “mostly peaceful protests” that they are involved in, Facebook has decided that they are a protected group when it comes to suggesting that they may be involved in arson activities connected to wildfires in Oregon, Washington, and California.



Policy Communications Manager Andy Stone [shared](#) the company’s decision on Twitter: “We are removing false claims that the wildfires in Oregon were started by certain groups. This is based on confirmation that law enforcement [said] that these rumors are forcing local fire and police agencies to divert resources from fighting the fires and protecting the public.”

A [second tweet](#) explained, “This is consistent with our past efforts to remove content that could lead to imminent harm given the possible risk to human life as the fires rage on.”

Rumors began swirling that Antifa — the domestic terrorist group which routinely engages setting fires and other street violence — was involved in setting the fires after the Portland police tweeted a [warning](#) to demonstrators last Tuesday.

“To those attending the demonstration tonight: Keep in mind the immediate risk the use of fire poses to community members. Since fire danger is very high right now due to high winds and the current dry climate, fire will spread quickly and could affect many lives.”

Some time after that, a rumor began swirling that six Antifa members had been arrested, allegedly causing the public to inundate local police with questions about the rumors. Local departments, including the Douglas County Sheriff’s Office, the Jackson County Sheriff’s Office, and the Medford and Mololla Police Departments, publish social-media posts refuting the claims.

Douglas County [implored the public](#) to only listen to official sources regarding the fires in a Facebook post. “Remember when we said to follow official sources only? Remember when we said rumors make this already difficult incident even harder? Rumors spread just like wildfire and now our 9-1-1 dispatchers and professional staff are being overrun with requests for information and inquiries on an UNTRUE rumor that 6 Antifa members have been arrested for setting fires in DOUGLAS COUNTY, OREGON. THIS IS NOT TRUE! Unfortunately, people are spreading this rumor and it is causing problems.”

The Sheriff’s Department begged residents to “Do your part, STOP. SPREADING. RUMORS!”



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The [FBI](#) also declared the Antifa fire-setting rumors untrue, tweeting, “Reports that extremists are setting wildfires in Oregon are untrue. Help us stop the spread of misinformation by only sharing information from trusted, official sources.”

Certainly, no one should be spreading false rumors about the wildfires in Oregon and elsewhere. However, is it really Facebook’s business to censor content about possible sources of these fires, even if that content is speculative? Even if law enforcement is denying that Antifa is involved, there’s simply no way for them to be sure of that unless they track down the ignition source for every single fire.

Even if the terrorist group is not involved in the setting of any wildfires, Antifa is, at least in part, responsible for those rumors, because setting fires is one of their methods of operation. They’ve been setting fires in Portland all summer long. You can’t blame the public for wondering about the unprecedented severity of the 2020 wildfires in Oregon when there’s a group of people in the state who routinely set fires as part of their usual rioting procedures.

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