

YouTube removes channels of Polish far-right media group

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YouTube has removed wRealu24, a Polish far-right online TV station, from its platform, where it had almost 550,000 subscribers and 90 million views.

The station has been accused of spreading hate speech and Russian propaganda. However, its leading figure, Marcin Rola, denies such claims and has received support from far-right members of parliament, who accuse YouTube of “Orwellian totalitarianism” and “corporate censorship”.



On Saturday, Rola (pictured with microphone above) announced that wRealu24’s channels had been removed from YouTube. He claimed that “the system is furious with us” for organising a nationalist “March of Polishness” in Warsaw last week. However, no official reason for the ban has yet been announced.

Earlier this year, following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, wRealu’s websites were blocked in Poland by the Internal Security Agency (ABW) and remain inaccessible. Although, again, no official reason was given, it came amid the blocking of various broadcasters and websites deemed to be spreading Russian propaganda.

Since the outbreak of war, wRealu24 has featured a number of guests criticising the welcome shown to Ukrainian refugees in Poland and speaking negatively of Ukraine and Ukrainians in general, notes the liberal Gazeta Wyborcza daily. One interviewee said that Jews were behind the war.

Last year, another guest said that Jews “are preparing to colonise Poland”. The channel has also regularly aired conspiracy theories about the coronavirus pandemic and vaccines. Nevertheless, figures from Poland’s national-conservative ruling camp accepted invitations to appear as guests before Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

In February, the head of the government’s Office for Veterans, Jan Józef Kasprzyk, appeared on the channel to discuss the question “Where does leftist hate for Polish

heroes come from?” Last year, a deputy justice minister, Marcin Romanowski, was interviewed about the problem of “neomarxism in universities”.

wRealu24 has been banned by YouTube before, in 2020, though it subsequently went back online. It is not known whether the latest removal is temporary or permanent. It comes after Never Again, a Polish anti-racism association, prepared a report last month at the request of YouTube on wRealu24’s hateful content, notes Gazeta Wyborcza.

Democratic Action (Akcja Demokratyczna), an activist group, earlier this month appealed to people to report wRealu to YouTube for “spreading Putin’s propaganda and hate speech”.

YouTube’s decision to ban the channel was quickly condemned by figures from Confederation (Konfederacja), a far-right group that sits in Poland’s parliament and which has also raised concern over what it sees as “privileges” being granted to Ukrainian refugees and criticised Covid vaccines.

“Allowing global concerns to dictate what we have the right to watch and listen to is a vision of Orwellian totalitarianism,” said one of its leaders, Robert Winnicki, quoted by Do Rzeczy.

Yesterday, Winnicki and other Confederation leaders – including Grzegorz Braun, who in 2019 said during an interview on wRealu24 that homosexual activity should be criminalised – held a press conference in parliament alongside Rola at which they condemned “corporate media censorship”.

Earlier this year, Confederation was itself banned from Facebook due to repeated violations of the platform’s community standards regarding Covid disinformation and hate speech. By contrast, wRealu24’s accounts remain accessible on both Facebook and Twitter while Confederation is still on YouTube.

In 2018, Rola also came to international attention when the BBC identified him as one of the “right-wing extremists” who spoke at an event in the UK part-funded by the Polish embassy in London.

<https://notesfrompoland.com/2022/08/23/youtube-removes-channels-of-polish-far-right-media-group/>