

Cloudflare Hints It Won't Cut Ties to Site Linked to Harassment

- Discussion forum Kiwi Farms has targeted trans Twitch streamer
- Cloudflare says ending service would set a precedent online



The Cloudflare headquarters in San Francisco, California *Photographer: David Paul Morris/Bloomberg*

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After days of silence, [Cloudflare Inc.](#) suggested Wednesday it wouldn’t cede to pressure to terminate internet services for controversial discussion forum Kiwi Farms, issuing a statement about its policies on abuse and saying that it didn’t want to set a precedent for speech on the internet.

Cloudflare, which provides products from web security services to web hosting and internet technology, has been under pressure to drop Kiwi Farms as a customer after the online forum known for harassment and hate campaigns recently forced a well-known transgender Twitch streamer into hiding. The Anti-Defamation League has [referred](#) to Kiwi Farms as “an extremist-friendly forum that has been the breeding ground for countless harassment campaigns.”

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In a [blog post](#) Wednesday morning in response to “questions that have arisen,” executives compared Cloudflare to a telephone company and said turning off security services because the content is “despicable” is the wrong policy.

“Terminating security services for content that our team personally feels is disgusting and immoral would be the popular choice,” according to a joint statement from Chief Executive Officer Matthew Prince and Alissa Starzak, the global head of public policy.

“But, in the long term, such choices make it more difficult to protect content that supports oppressed and marginalized voices against attacks.”

[Read about the campaign for Cloudflare to end support for Kiwi Farms](#)

Over the last decade, Kiwi Farms has been tied to multiple doxxing attacks, in which a person’s private, personal information is published online, or “swatting,” where anonymous attackers use that private information to send police or SWAT teams to a targeted person’s home. At least two people who have died by suicide have been targeted by Kiwi Farms users, according to messages from the victims themselves or friends cited in news reports. Kiwi Farms receives 10 million views a month, according to data from web traffic analysis service SimilarWeb.

Clara Sorrenti, 28, whose online name is “Keffals,” has been leading the charge to force Cloudflare to terminate services for Kiwi Farms. The Twitch streamer and political commentator said she was swatted at her home in London, Ontario, earlier this month. She then moved to a different, undisclosed address, but said Kiwi Farms users tracked her every move and continued to target her. “There are countless people actively, every day, being harassed by this site -- most neurodivergent or transgender,” Sorrenti said in an interview on Tuesday. “It would help a lot of people if Cloudflare no longer provided their services to Kiwi Farms.”

Her cause has garnered widespread support online. In August, the #DropKiwiFarms hashtag was mentioned 10,000 times on Twitter, according to a search through BrandMentions.

Kiwi Farms creator Joshua Moon told Bloomberg News that “the forum does not condone behavior besides on-site discussion.”

Cloudflare has terminated services for a select few sites in the past, including White supremacist site Daily Stormer and controversial forum 8chan. In the blog, the executives noted that after those moves, the company saw an increase in authoritarian regimes asking for the termination of services for human rights organizations. “Just because we did it in a limited set of cases before doesn’t mean we were right when we did. Or that we will ever do it again,” they wrote.

Since then, Cloudflare has had discussions with policy makers that led executives to conclude that “the power to terminate security services for the sites was not a power Cloudflare should hold. Not because the content of those sites wasn’t abhorrent – it was – but because security services most closely resemble internet utilities,” according to the blog.

Cloudflare executives also draw a stark distinction between their web security services and services that host content. The company said the vast majority of its customers don't yet use its hosting products. While Cloudflare says it doesn't provide security services to sanctioned organizations or individuals or illegal content in the US, "we believe that cyberattacks are something that everyone should be free of. Even if we fundamentally disagree with the content," the executives wrote.

Falsely reporting an incident to law enforcement and some hacking techniques associated with doxxing can be crimes, according to criminal defense attorney David Lane. Some individuals who have participated in swatting have faced prosecution.

Cloudflare said more than 20% of web users use its services. "When considering our policies we need to be mindful of the impact we have and precedent we set for the internet as a whole," the executives wrote in the blog post.

Sorrenti didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on the Cloudflare blog. Cloudflare didn't respond to a request for comment.