Ungoverned Online Spaces and Grey-Area Content

Challenges of Addressing Terrorism-Adjacent and Terrorist-Driven Content Across Jurisdictions and Multistakeholder Solutions

23 June 2023 | 3:00 - 4:30 pm EDT | Hybrid | Conference Room 9, UN Headquarters, NY

Concept Note

Background and Context

Violent extremist and terrorist groups and actors actively exploit online spaces and interaction. For example, far-right violent extremists[1] in the United States, Germany and New Zealand have livestreamed attacks on platforms built for watching video games, created social networks to mobilise for violence, and designed their own websites, games, and other interactive online spaces. Terrorist groups also recruit through online platforms, create online propaganda, and develop bespoke websites and games. Therefore, it is more important than ever to understand who, how, where, and why online spaces are being used and abused by violent extremist actors. At the same time, it is essential to emphasise that online environments provide a multitude of positive and pro-social experiences for many users, and to defend these aspects of online interaction.

As our lives become exponentially more intertwined with technology, increasingly more online spaces provide a window into interactive virtual realities – or metaverses – to come. As such, online denizens, policymakers, security practitioners, and tech creators must understand the potential risks and take collective steps to build resilience against exploitation of online spaces by violent extremist and terrorist actors. Thus, this side-event will focus on the challenges presented by unregulated online spaces, "grey areas", that can only be addressed by multilateralism and institutional cooperation.

Where content is legal across jurisdictions, there needs to be multiagency and multidisciplinary approaches to assessing what content presents a danger of movement from non-violent to violent extremism, identifying what ways to criminalise terrorist-created content and operated sites and games, and developing opportunities to work with industry on these grey areas to help them tune into areas of concern and actions that can be taken while

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[1] This includes violent extremism and terrorism referred to by some governments as extreme right-wing terrorism, by some governments as far-right extremism and by others as a form of racially, ethnically or other ideologically motivated violent extremism or terrorism, which may incorporate a range of hateful, xenophobic, misogynistic, anti-government, anti-authority and other violent grievances that may lead to mobilisation of violence.

protecting human rights. Additionally, where this content is illegal and clearly terrorist-operated, we need to determine how to work better together across jurisdictions to identify and remove this content.

Objectives

This panel offers expertise on the issue of online ungoverned spaces and grey-area content that presents challenges to the current counterterrorism framework structure.

When we know that there are illegal terrorist-operated websites or online games, this panel will address:
- Where can we work with the industry to help them moderate this content?
- Where can we work with law enforcement to find alternative avenues of removal, especially across jurisdictional differences?

Where content is "lawful but awful" or borderline, this panel will address:
- What are the avenues available to work together to assess and address this content through other means?
- How can we ensure the protection of freedoms and rights (e.g., speech, beliefs, etc.) while also seeking to reduce vulnerability and opportunities for terrorists to take advantage?

The whole session specifically addresses multi-stakeholder engagement in countering terrorism and violent extremism while ensuring compliance with human rights and rule of law in the especially challenging cross-jurisdictional, transnational online space.

Logistics Note

The event will be organized in a hybrid format to facilitate participation, with virtual participation taking place via WebEx. The meeting will be conducted in English.

To confirm your participation (online or in person), please click here to RSVP.

For any questions regarding this event, kindly contact Jennifer Bramlette, UNCTED, bramlette@un.org; Jessica White, RUSI, jessicaw@rusi.org; or Sian Hutchinson, UNOCT, sian.hutchinson@un.org.

AGENDA	
23 June 2023, 3:00 – 4:30 pm EDT	
5 mins	**Opening Remarks,** *Mr. Raffi Gregorian, Director and Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism*
5 mins	**Introductions and Setting the Scene,** *Dr Jessica White, Royal United Services Institute & Extremism and Gaming Research Network*

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5 mins	**Challenges of Addressing Terrorist Operated Websites,** *Adam Hadley, Tech Against Terrorism*
5 mins	**Terrorist-Driven and -Adjacent Content in Transnational Online Gaming Spaces,** *Galen Lamphere-Englund, Extremism and Gaming Research Network*
5 mins	**Challenges of Defining and Strategizing on Borderline Content,** *Dr Erin Saltman, Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism*
5 mins	**Identifying Ideological Influence in Grey Content,** *Claudia Wallner, Royal United Services Institute*
5 mins	**Challenges for Gamers Responding to "Lawful but Awful" Content,** *Liliane Vicente, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism*
5 mins	**Challenges for States in Working Across Jurisdictions and Recommendations for Improving Cooperation,** *Jennifer Bramlette, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate*
30 mins	**Panel Discussion with All Speakers on Challenges of Addressing Terrorism-Adjacent and Terrorist-Driven Content Across Jurisdictions and Multistakeholder Solutions,** *moderated by Dr Jessica White*
15 mins	**Question and Answer,** *moderated by Dr Jessica White*
5 mins	**Closing remarks,** *Dr. Sharri Clark, Acting Director for the Office of CVE, Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State*
Close of Side-Event	

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