

FIVE WAYS TO COUNTER EXTREMISTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

An ISIS propaganda video streams across the world within moments, while a lonely white supremacist tweets hateful messages to a young student. The rise of social media has sparked an increase of extremists and right-wing hate groups, who hide behind anonymous profiles to recruit and terrorize others online. To counter and rise above their actions, we offer five ways that you can take action by opposing extremism in social media, sometimes with just a few clicks.

- I. Report Hate Speech and Rhetoric:** Social media networks count on engaged users like you to report hate speech and content that promotes extremism. When you see racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia on social media, report the user to the appropriate social media platform so their account can be deleted. Even if the perpetrator creates a new account, they will have lost their followers.
- II. Commit to Sharing Information that Counters Extremism:** Share stories and news articles that give the facts and thereby counter extremist agendas. Powerful content to share may include: firsthand accounts by individuals who experienced hate speech or extremism, news of solidarity among diverse religious or ethnic groups, and volunteer or donation opportunities.
- III. Join a Hashtag Campaign:** Trending topics, labeled with hashtags, are a great way to raise awareness, counter stereotypes with facts and challenge the misinformed. Hashtags provide opportunities for social media users to speak out and find others who are reacting to the same topic. Make it a movement!
- IV. In Crises, Provide Information in Real Time:** In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, mass killing, or terrorist attack, social media users can provide helpful information, such as the location of blood banks or where services and materials are needed on the ground. Remember to check the facts and look for updates before sharing. If someone is located near a crisis, such as a terrorist attack or natural disaster, Facebook's Safety Check provides a way to tell family members they are safe.
- V. Hijack a Hashtag:** It's possible to "hijack" a hashtag used by extremists as a way to disable and challenge hateful propaganda on social media. When ISIS used the hashtag #alfurqan to promote an official statement, anti-ISIS Twitter users "hijacked" #alfurqan by tweeting positive, anti-ISIS messages with the hashtag. Some users tweeted more than 100 anti-extremism tweets¹ each, so when extremists tried to find the #alfurqan statement, they found anti-ISIS tweets instead.

¹ ISIS: Under Pressure on Twitter. (n.d.). Retrieved August 30, 2016, from <http://www.njhomelandsecurity.gov/analysis/isisontwitter>