



Statement of Concern Regarding Social Media Platforms

Social media is a global cornerstone for communication. It provides a powerful platform for spreading news, information, and stories across the world, and has facilitated meaningful connections between people regardless of location and position in society. Cure Violence Global has benefited from and is grateful for the ways in which social media has helped to spread our stories and to connect our organization to individuals and communities across the world.

The ability to spread information and connect people comes with a great danger because the platform can also be used in ways that harm people, groups, communities, and the world. This is true for all social media platforms. Because of this great danger, all organizations that manage social media platforms have an essential responsibility to put in place policies and processes to provide a safe platform for its users and to the public.

In this regard, recent actions by leadership at Twitter have created significant concerns about the safety of the platform by allowing for the spread of misinformation, hate, and incitement and legitimization of violence. These actions have included:

- Dissolution of the Trust and Safety Council, which was formed to address hate speech, child exploitation, suicide, self-harm, and other problems on the platform
- Significant reductions in the staffing of teams responsible for enforcing rules against hate speech and other violating posts globally
- Elimination of the human rights team tasked with protection of those at risk in global conflicts and crises
- Reinstatement of the accounts of numerous people with a history of spreading misinformation, hate, and incitement and legitimization of violence
- Arbitrary and capricious enforcement of ambiguous policies, such as the suspension of journalists and the sudden imposition of blocking external links to sites
- Launching of a system of verification that is being used to elevate accounts that spread misinformation, hate, and incitement and legitimization of violence
- Significant increases in toxic tweets on Twitter, including a tripling of slurs against Black Americans, a 58% increase in slurs against gay men,¹ and a 61% increase in antisemitic tweets²
- Significant reductions in the responses to reports of toxic materials on Twitter³

These actions by leadership at Twitter suggest that toxic speech will not be controlled and that accounts spreading toxic speech will be encouraged and emboldened. The current trends in hate speech may be an indication of what is to come for the world and particularly for the most fragile and vulnerable people and communities in the world.

¹ New York Times, December 12, 2022. "Hate Speech's Rise on Twitter Is Unprecedented, Researchers Find" (data from Center for Countering Digital Hate and Anti-Defamation League)

² Anti-Defamation League

³ Anti-Defamation League



These same concerns exist for other social media platforms as well, including TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Hate and dehumanizing speech have led to some of the worst atrocities in history, and hateful social media posts have already led to lethal violence. Many studies have shown the connection between dehumanizing language and violence, including genocides. Countless cases are documented of speeches and statements that have incited violence, including lynchings and other hate crimes. And the science is building on social media and the ways in which toxic speech incites lethal violence in the real world. Tweets can inspire atrocities.

Responding to these dangers is an enormous challenge that each social media organization has taken on with extraordinary effort and investment, and in very difficult social and political environments around the world.

This statement of concern is intended to urgently identify the rising spread of misinformation, hate, and incitement and legitimization of violence on social media platforms. It is also intended to highlight the dangers of the spread of toxic speech and the risk of this type of speech inspiring violence in the real world.

In response to these concerns, Cure Violence Global pledges to:

- Advocate for social media safety.
- Support and amplify the organizations involved in social media safety.
- Provide information to people about social media safety and the contagion of speech, hate, and violence.
- Speak out against toxic speech by providing condemnation, education, and warning as warranted.

Further, we offer to help address this issue with social media organizations. While we are not moderators, we are experts in the understanding of the contagious spread of speech and violence, and in ways to interrupt, change behaviors, and change norms to make communities safer. Many of our partners already act as virtual interrupters by stopping the escalation of conflicts that start on social media from turning into a shooting or killing.

We welcome other organizations and individuals to sign on to our statement of concern and to join us in helping to advocate for safer social media platforms. To connect with us, go to <https://cvg.org/csms/>.