

# Report warns of increase in online terror content after tech job cuts

CRISTINA CRIDDLE — LONDON

Social media sites are at risk of letting terrorist content proliferate on their platforms following a wave of job cuts across the industry, undermining years of work in counter-terrorism, warned a UN-backed organisation.

Some terrorist actors have increased operations on Twitter after key staff tasked with monitoring this content were sacked, says a report by Tech Against Terrorism, an initiative that helps companies police content online.

The warning comes two months after Twitter cut its 7,500-strong workforce nearly in half following Elon Musk's \$44bn takeover of the social network. Significant cuts were made to Twitter's trust and safety teams, which aim to protect users from illegal and harmful content, as part of the restructuring.

"If we come across dangerous content, we are not even sure who to contact any more because they have been sacked," said Adam Hadley, director of Tech Against Terrorism, which published its annual review of terrorist and violent extremist activity online yesterday.

Twitter did not respond to a request for comment.

Tech Against Terrorism is a public-private partnership launched in 2017. Its partners include Meta, Google, Microsoft and Twitter, as well as the UK, Spanish and Swiss governments.

The body works with hundreds of smaller platforms, including Pinterest and Etsy, and in the past year has reviewed more than 19,000 websites or posts containing terrorist content from more than 70 tech companies.

Hadley also expressed concerns that broader tech job cuts could affect the moderation of terrorist content.

"Platforms constantly have to adapt filters and search terms, and terrorists always find ways around these rules. Our concern is that this requires deep expertise, and many of the experts that we are used to working with at large platforms have left," Hadley added.

Both Snapchat and Meta, which owns Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp, have cut staff in recent months following slowing revenue growth and declining advertising spending, their primary sources of revenue.

Meta said safety and security remain top priorities, and it has more than 40,000 people devoted to this work. Snap, which owns Snapchat, said its trust and safety team was one of the least affected by the restructuring, and no one considered a specialist in this area had left.

The report also highlighted the rise of small websites set up by online actors to host and share terrorist content. The widely available sites are often left online for long periods as actors "exploit a lack of global consensus" on takedowns, as well as differing legal jurisdictions and under-resourced law enforcement.

"Almost nothing is happening about these big terrorist-operated websites, [and] because many of these sites stay online and are so easy to find, it is hard to discuss it publicly," Hadley said.

The organisation is working on a free tool with Google's research and development arm, Jigsaw, to assist with the moderation process for owners of smaller websites.

**See Lex**