



THE CHANGING FORMS OF INCITEMENT TO TERROR AND VIOLENCE: The Need for a New International Response

FROM BIG LIES TO THE LONE WOLF: HOW SOCIAL NETWORKING INCUBATES AND MULTIPLIES ONLINE HATE AND TERRORISM*

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Extremists leverage the Internet to drive their anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic agenda. The Simon Wiesenthal Center's Digital Terrorism and Hate Project is now in its fourteenth year. Back in 1995 there was one hate site, www.stormfront.org (still active today with an international following and hundreds of thousands of postings). At present our organization is monitoring far more than fourteen thousand problematic hate and terror-related sites. As troubling as these numbers are, the exponential growth of viral social networking makes the numbering game increasingly irrelevant, as a single posting, image, song, or YouTube video can reach untold thousands and beyond.

Our research reveals that social networking sites serve as incubators, validators, and motivators of pre-genocidal hate against Israel and the Jewish people. Collectively, online bigotry, anti-Semitism, and terrorism present ever-evolving threats to Israel and the Jewish people.

Measures must be taken to thwart this multifaceted threat. First and foremost, it is essential that the providers of these services, including Facebook, Google, YouTube, and Twitter, are also part of the equation. They must be held accountable; they must be part of the solution—not only serving as platforms for the haters.

Second, the end-users alone—in most cases teenagers—cannot be left responsible for the content they interact with. Young people are generally ill-equipped to defend themselves when they are targets of racist bullying or hate attacks. In addition, young people are themselves the targets of hate games, hate music, and online relationships encouraging membership in extremist groups or lone-wolf terrorist scenarios.

Third, there is a need for a consortium approach to these challenges, which should include governments, law enforcement, intelligence agencies, NGOs, and the Internet community at large. Achieving this goal entails constantly engaging the online companies to do their share. It is vitally important, therefore, especially for those living in the United States or seeking to affect U.S.-based companies, to frame their challenges to the U.S. online community in a context they are more likely to respond to. In the United States the first “commandment” is the First Amendment, which among other things guarantees freedom of speech. In dealing with companies like Facebook, Google, or YouTube, it is not helpful to challenge the free-speech principle but, rather, to address the companies' own rules. A contractual agreement

is created every time an online user presses the gray “I agree” button. These companies’ online contracts give them the power to remove postings and even service. That approach has yielded positive results and has led to the deletion of many thousands of websites, forums, and Facebook pages.

Fourth, the Jewish world, including the state of Israel and Jewish NGOs, must be more creative and bold in harnessing online technologies to reach out to young Arabs who are fueling the so-called Arab Spring. For now, the deeply embedded anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish stereotypes are largely reinforced, not challenged online.

This harsh reality emerged when the Simon Wiesenthal Center launched a modest website called *Ask Musa*, offering basic instruction in Judaism for Muslims in five languages. Unfortunately, attempts to get coverage in the Arab or Muslim media proved futile. I was granted one lengthy interview with a brilliant young reporter from Al Arabiya in Washington, DC. We went through the whole site with her cameraman and she conducted a very thorough and respectful interview. Her last question was: “Rabbi, this is all very impressive, and please don’t be insulted, but the question I’m going to ask you is the question that would be on the list of everyone watching this report when it goes on TV: why are you doing this? What’s the real reason behind AskMusa.org? Is it a conspiracy?” I replied: “Yes, it’s a conspiracy. It’s a conspiracy of truth, because we can’t figure out anything else to try with.”

That interview never reached the air. There are hundreds of channels out there, and one can always say—if you don’t like what you see, just change the channel. On Facebook and so on, no one can force the other side to look. It will take, then, a “Jewish village” to begin to use some of its dynamics and brains to try and communicate to the Arab and Muslim masses. What they are being fed on a daily basis should be of deep concern to everyone.

Many examples of digital hate (see below) today come from Facebook, which is increasingly the weapon of choice of extremists seeking to influence the marketplace of ideas. It is true that Facebook has done more than any other Internet company to combat digital hate. Indeed, it has put a global team in place to monitor and remove hate and terror pages and responds quickly to inquiries. We do not always agree with their decisions—especially their insistence that denigration of religions and denial of the Shoah constitute protected speech. There is also the case of the Saudi prince who offered a large sum of money for kidnapping an Israeli soldier. After we protested to Facebook, they removed the offending content; yet the prince retains his Facebook page and his links.

An imperfect Facebook, then, rates a B+ for cooperation in this arena. YouTube rates a D- and Twitter an N/A. Twitter has yet to even acknowledge that its service is regularly leveraged by terrorists. NGO representatives, human rights activists, Jewish defense agencies, and others engage the social-network providers with accurate information and exert pressure on them. It is a thankless but indispensable task.

DISSEMINATING HATE

How, then, do anti-Semites and haters of Israel go about deploying Facebook, YouTube, and so on? In 2011, in an attempt to ride the coattails of social networking activity connected to the Arab Spring, a call was issued to launch a spring intifada on May 15.



Pictured here is not only the Temple Mount in Jerusalem but also the Machpelah Cave in Hebron, along with an Arab horse and rider.

This is the social networking component of a global campaign to remove Israeli embassies. In the Facebook page below, protestors extricate the Israeli flag from Israel's embassy in Cairo.



These images are the creations of the artist Carlos Latuff—a vicious anti-Semite and hater of Israel who is also a brilliant cartoonist. His attacks predate the Internet era, having begun during the First Lebanon War when he gained some notoriety. Later he gained more international attention when one of his cartoons received second prize in Tehran's International Holocaust Cartoon Conference. At present the Internet has made him an international player; just ten years ago he was a very talented anti-Semite poisoning a limited audience in Brazil.





The adjacent page was used to promote the Global March to Jerusalem for March 2012. Thanks to airbrushes of the skyline of the Old City, there is no hint of anything Jewish here. This particular site, though, eschewed violence and instead invoked Gandhi's nonviolent movement, and his concept of thousands of people who march together to change reality on the ground. Backing this nonviolent movement, however, was none other than Hizbullah's mouthpiece Al-Manar, which also embraced the global march to Jerusalem.



NWO (New World Order), a very high-quality, anonymous (conspiracy-laden) website (now offline), purports to reveal the ongoing plot to create a "Greater Land of Israel." Tracing this notion on its online journey, we see that it is put in play by a blogger and then repeated—same visual, same story—by the Northerntruthseeker. A Google check revealed seventy-five thousand results emanating from just one posting. This reflects the power of social networking and the viral nature of today's Internet.





Below, YouTube presents the “Protocols of Zion.” On the lower right-hand side, subscribers can be seen—some Iranians, some Nazis—who are classic Jew-haters.



Among the players of the international Jewish conspiracy identified on this Facebook page are the World Jewish Congress and their “lackeys,” the Rotaries.



Beyond the *Protocols*, contemporary conspiracies thrive online. The 9/11 attack is attributed to Israel or the CIA. A YouTube video, posted from the United States, says the battle against Gaddafi was coordinated from Tel Aviv; a blogger invokes a source called Real Zionist News.



Next is a site from Pakistan. We would be wise to start paying attention to what is happening online in that country. Facebook is apparently the most popular method of communication there, and probably harbors a treasure trove of information about what Pakistanis are being taught about the Jewish nation. At this particular site we learn that American Zionists are plotting to attack Pakistan, and that "Hindu Zionists" were the ones who carried out the murderous Mumbai terror attacks.

The following are additional samples from Facebook groups. Anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish themes are well evident; it is not a pretty picture. By now, all this material has been removed from Facebook.





Postings in Turkish, Malaysian, Farsi—a hateful idea, born online, going viral in multiple languages. And let us not forget that the social networking venues serve as portals for direct recruitment, fundraising, and training.

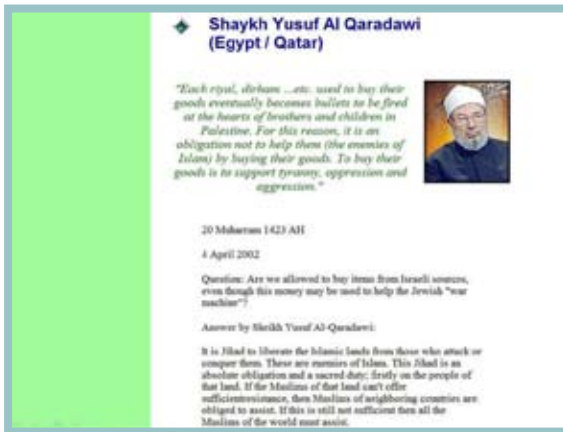


I mentioned the low grade for YouTube, and that is primarily because they are not responsive to our protests over the multitude of how-to videos for the do-it-yourself criminal or terrorist. There are YouTube videos that teach how to convert any cell phone into a trigger for an explosive.



Swords of Jihad, in its fourth edition, is wildly popular. It contributes to an online culture that is potentially quite devastating.

BOYCOTT/DIVESTMENT/SANCTIONS (BDS)



This online thread of the boycott-Israel campaign leads from the use of Twitter by Adalah (the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel) to Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. One of the most influential Sunni clerics, he is hailed as a moderate for advocating women’s participation in local elections, even as he issued early fatwas validating Palestinian suicide bombers, including married women.

The U.S. components of the BDS campaign include Facebook, YouTube, and even America’s foremost racist, David Duke. Duke has used the Internet to reboot his image. In the 1980s and 1990s, he built his core constituency by promoting hate against Jews, blacks, and Arabs. But in recent years, his hatred for America and Jews has earned him great popularity in the Arab world, where he is often invited to lecture.



Last year Duke interviewed an African American woman in Los Angeles who had been participating in Occupy Los Angeles and who loudly told the media that “Zionist bankers” had to be removed from the United States. So Duke, the archenemy of blacks, made his peace with one African American to help virally spread hatred against his number-one enemy—the Jews.¹



Other elements of the campaign, invoked by Palestinian and other enemies of Israel who seek to erase four thousand years of Jewish history, include possible, eventual economic implications for kosher products, and a growing theme of online attacks—denying the Jewish people’s claim to the Land of Israel. In the real world, one of UNESCO’s committees has already rebranded Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem as a mosque.



The Jewish people, in other words, now also have to defend their very identity as Jews. This blog from Indonesia promotes Shlomo Sand, the Israeli academic who claims that there is no Jewish people and, hence, no Jewish claim to Palestine.

ANTI-SEMITISM, SHOAH DENIAL, ISRAEL AS NAZIS, INTIMIDATION



The following are examples of the repackaging of hate in digital clothing. This vicious song by “Asadullah Alshishani” was posted following the incident involving the Turkish ship *Mavi Marmara* offshore of Gaza. It closely mimics the murderous Nazi “Horst-Wessel-Lied” song. (It was posted by a person in Pittsburgh, later arrested in January 2011 for assaulting two FBI agents.)

Here, on Flickr, we find denial of the Shoah along with insults of Elie Wiesel and all Holocaust survivors.



An essay posted on Scribd, on the Treblinka "hoax," somehow finds its way onto a blog called *Muslim in Suffer*, which eventually leads to a nonexistent reward for proving that anyone actually died at the Treblinka death camp.



Here is the latest attack by the Iranians on the Holocaust, with some of their worst Shoah-related cartoons. Note that while they deny the Holocaust, every page contains the Star of David with a swastika embedded in it. Thus, for Israel's enemies, the Shoah did not happen; but Israelis are the real Nazis.



There are numerous quasi-terrorist threats against Jews in various countries, including a list of Italian Jews. This U.S. site, *Jew Watch*, posts the list right next to the *Protocols*.



In January 2011, there was an attack on several synagogues and a Jewish school in Montreal. Interestingly, there was no public discussion at all about whether the perpetrators, who were never caught, may have been Arab or Muslim. We found, however, a tremendous amount of chatter about this hate crime on Arab and Muslim sites. This included claims that Arabs and Muslims were innocent of the crime—even though no one ever accused them of it.



There is, finally, the issue of the “lone wolf.” Since 9/11, there has been concern especially in the United States that the Islamist modus operandi of violence and terrorism might inspire homegrown neo-Nazis and extremists. Although that has not happened, the notion of the lone wolf or “leaderless resistance” was incubated online for most of the last decade by domestic U.S. extremists, including specific instructions for attacks. The shooter at a Jewish day camp in southern California in 1999 claimed he was inspired by the book *Vigilantes of Christendom: A History of the Phineas Priesthood*. That book justifies lone-wolf attacks by invoking the role model of Pinchas, who slew another Israelite and a Midianite woman on the grounds that he was doing G-d’s work (Numbers 25). This is what motivated the white-supremacist shooter, Buford Furrow, whose original target had been the headquarters of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.

About two years ago we began to see a sort of mutation—the co-opting by Islamists of the lone-wolf concept that was promoted by domestic U.S. extremists. Here a fatwa from the thirteenth century is posted online in the twenty-first century, to give religious sanction for a lone individual to attack enemy ranks and with full knowledge that he will be killed. This is, in other words, a religious validation for a lone suicide bomber. In 2010 terms we see justification in a more contemporary context in this “Confessions of a human bomb from Palestine.”



The *As-Ansar* forum proudly posts pictures of individuals who recently launched attacks in the United States. By now the term used is “lone wolf,” which is also used to describe Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the so-called underwear bomber who almost succeeded in blowing up a jet above Detroit with explosive-saturated underwear. And another Arabic posting with “Lone Wolf” as the title honors the mass-murderer Major Nidal Malik Hasan and the failed shoe-bomber, Richard Reid.



And finally, an image from *Inspire*, Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's online magazine. It does not target the Arab street in Yemen but, rather, young people in English-speaking countries who are urged to take revenge for America's alleged brutality.



The Simon Wiesenthal Center has created the Digital Terrorism and Hate app to highlight its annual findings. The app can be accessed using an iPad, iPhone, iPod touch, Mac computer or any Android mobile device and following the instructions on the image below.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper is associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a leading Jewish human rights NGO. Widely recognized as a pioneer and international authority on issues related to digital hate and terrorism, Rabbi Cooper has been a longtime activist for Jewish and human rights causes on five continents.

ENDNOTES

*The source of the visuals in this article is the Simon Wiesenthal Center Digital Terrorism and Hate Project.

1 <http://www.davidduke.com/?p=24719>.