SAMIH

Spotlight on Anti-Muslim Internet Hate

An initiative of the

Online Hate
Prevention Institute

Powered by

FIGHT
AGAINST
HATE

FightAgainstHate.com

Project Background

Now is the time for action

The impact of the brutal acts of Daesh (ISIS) in Iraq and Syria,[1] violent extremism and the threat of violent extremism from Daesh and its supporters in the West,[2] and the refugee crisis as people flee Syria,[3] are all being felt around the world.

Condemnation of those engaged in this brutality and the promotion of violent extremism is well deserved and fully justified. What's completely unjustified and wrong, however, is responding to these concerns with vilification and hate against anyone who is or appears to be Muslim. Online, we see a rising tide of anti-Muslim hate and the use of social media to coordinate local and international action targeting Muslim communities.

One such action targeting the Muslim community is the Global Protest scheduled for October 9th and 10th 2015.[4] The protest is not targeting extremists but ordinary Muslims. In Australia the United Patriot Front have focused on October 10th calling on people to protest outside local Mosques.[5]

This rising anti-Muslim vilification is leading to far-right extremism and a growing level of hostility and threats online. This hate is slipping into the discourse in work places, educational institutions, and on the public streets. It's time to unite and take a stand against this vilification of Muslims and the Muslim community. It's time to push back against the hate.

Let's set a new tone

Social media is at the forefront of today's public discourse. It's in social media where a line needs to be drawn. Social media platforms have the right to decide what is and what is not tolerated on their platforms, and the major social media companies have already prohibited hate speech including religious vilification. Let's use that to set a new tone for the public discourse.

The Samih Project will empower the public to report anti-Muslim hate in Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, and to register and classify their reports in FightAgainstHate.com. Reports will be collated and tracked so the response of the social media companies can be measured and followed up.

Working together we can set the tone for public discourse ensuring:

- hate speech, incitement and vilification is removed
- those who inadvertently promote hate are reminded to take care in what they say
- Infrastructure built to promote hate and vilify others can be dismantled

---

[1] Tim Arango, "ISIS Transforming Into Functioning State That Uses Terror as Tool", The New York Time, 21 July 2015.
[2] Josh Levs and Holly Yan, "Western allies reject ISIS leader's threats against their civilians", CNN, September 23, 2014; Lizzie Dearden, "Anzac Day terror plot: Five teenagers arrested in Australia for 'planning Isis-inspired attack'", The Independent, 8 September 2015
[3] AAP and Staff Writers, "Syria refugee intake: Abbott MP says we should accept 50,000", The Herald Sun, 8 September 2015.
[4] http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/news/phoenixs-jon-ritzheimer-plans-global-anti-islam-protest-7554126
[5] Bianca Hall, Authorities brace for ugly scenes as Australian 'patriots' plan mosque protests , The Age, August 13 2015 online at: http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/authorities-brace-for-ugly-scenes-as-australian-patriots-plan-mosque-protests-20150813-giy69k.html

The Samih Campaign

Over a two month period, from September 24th to November 24th, the Samih campaign will promote the reporting of anti-Muslim hate on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to both the social media platforms and to OHPI's FightAgainstHate.com software.

The collation of reports in FightAgainstHate.com, including the classification of the reported items, will provide vital data on the nature and prevalence of different types of anti-Muslim hate. It will provide transparency on how the platforms respond to users' reports and follow up where items are not removed. Past experience indicates this is essential as only a very small number of reports are removed based on public reports alone.

Charities and community organisations will be able to join the campaign and assist with:

- Promotion of the campaign
- Reporting of online anti-Muslim hate by their members
- Fundraising to see the project progress beyond the campaign stage

Experts will be able to join the campaign to help verify the reported content and refute the hate propaganda it contains.

Current and former members of Parliament will be able to sign up to express their support for the campaign.

Media partners will be provided with campaign information and data to help refute extremist propaganda and bigotry and promote the campaign to the public.

In addition to encouraging reporting and working to see anti-Muslim hate reported and documented, an associated fundraising campaign will raise the resources needed to take the project forward.

The immediate impact

The Samih Campaign will give the public the motivation to make a concerted effort to report anti-Muslim hate. It will remedy the demoralisation that results when users receive negative feedback stating that their very reasonable reports are being rejected by social media companies. It will lead to more hate speech coming down, and those promoting anti-Muslim hate being more careful of what they say online in order to avoid repercussions for crossing the line into incitement.

More importantly, the campaign will allow members of the public to play an active role in combating anti-Muslim hate in an anonymous and safe manner. It will allow organisations and public leaders like politicians a space where they can state their support for the Muslim community and against extremism targeting the community.

Finally, the campaign will allow people to show their support by sharing it in social media, helping to set a tone of tolerance and inclusiveness to counter that of hate and exclusion currently being promoted by extremist groups.

The big picture overview

The Samih Campaign is the first vital step in a project that involves up to eight stages. Progress through these stages will very much depend on the level of support the campaign receives through fundraising and sponsorship. Each stage amplified the value and builds on what came before.

STAGE ONE: Run the Samih campaign on FightAgainstHate.com with a focus on gathering a large number of examples of anti-Muslim hate on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter.

The public will be invited to report anti-Muslim hate to the social media companies, then register their report with OHPI's FightAgainstHate.com reporting tool and classify it according to six categories of anti-Muslim hate or "other". The software will give a live count of the number of items reported. OHPI will work with our 18,000+ Facebook supporters as well as a range of community organisations and online groups to encourage greater vigilance and reporting.

STAGE TWO: Publish six briefings one on each of the six different categories of anti-Muslim hate. Each briefing will include nine examples of hate, three from each of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. The briefings will enable campaigning and mass reporting to get these examples removed. This coordination will see the worst of the items removed.

STAGE THREE: Archive the hate then provide each of the social media companies with a full list of items on their platform, challenging them to remove the hate. The archive will be of practical value to researchers and will also enable the social media companies to see the items causing civil society concern.

STAGE FOUR: Create a report examining the hate in full. The report would show the prevalence of different types of hate and would serve as a vital tool to inform future work challenging anti-Muslim hate both online and in society more generally. At this stage international experts would also be involved to review the items and remove any false or questionable reports.

STAGE FIVE: Print and distribute the report to key stakeholder. This includes Government, Human Rights Organisations, Researchers and the Media. With this report in hand, more will be able to be done to tackle the growing problem of anti-Muslim hate.

STAGE SIX: Find how effective social media companies are at removing anti-Muslim online hate. This will be done by re-examining the data after 5 months to see how much of it has come down.

STAGE SEVEN: Publish 6 effectiveness briefings, each looking at how effective Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are at removing a particular category of hate and providing examples of the sort of content that is not being removed. The briefings will enable online campaigns for better responses by the platforms. This will allow focused campaigning on an additional 36 items.

STAGE EIGHT: Create an updated report including the effectiveness information and distribute it to key stakeholders. This will empower more people to take action in the future.

The long term impact

In 2013 the Online Hate Prevention Institute produced the most comprehensive report on anti-Muslim hate in social media to-date.[6] That report was quoted in the 7th Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) observatory report on Islamophobia,[7] cited in academic papers and by academic Institutions,[8] praised by political and community leaders,[9] and shared in social media almost 3,000 times.[10]

This new campaign will enable a new and even more comprehensive understanding of anti-Muslim hate in social media. For the first time we will have empirical data on the prevalence of different flavours of anti-Muslim hate through the major social media platforms, and data on how the platforms respond to reports against such content.

This work will inform us of the need for specific counter narratives, provide an idea of the scope of the problem, and create a wider public awareness for of the need to challenge anti-Muslim hate speech both online and in everyday life.

The current discourse in much of society is harmful to the public good of an inclusive society. This campaign will help address that issue and reverse the trend.

---

[6] Andre Oboler, "Islamophobia on the Internet: The growth of online hate targeting Muslims", OHPI, 2013.

[7] http://www.oic-oci.org/oicv2/upload/islamophobia/2014/en/reports/islamophoba_7th_report_2014.pdf pg 12

[8] Imran Awan, "Islamophobia and Twitter: A Typology of Online Hate Against Muslims on Social Media", Policy & Internet Volume 6, Issue 2, pages 133–150, June 2014; Bridge Initiative Team, "New Report Looks at Growth of Islamophobia on the Internet", Al-Waleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University.

[9] http://ohpi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/StatementsOfSupportExtracts.pdf

[10] http://ohpi.org.au/islamophobia-on-the-internet-the-growth-of-online-hate-targeting-muslims/