

2021 2022 REPORT

**Islamism
on the Internet**

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jugendschutz.net is the joint center of the German federal government and the federal states tasked with the protection of children and young people on the internet.

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 **live** Democracy!

 Kommission für
Jugendmedienschutz

die
medienanstalten 



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Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the internet, young people have access to networking, communication and information, and they can also be addressed easily.

These paths of communication are also traveled by extremists, for example by Islamist groups, to disseminate anti-democratic and misanthropic views. Spreading disinformation and conspiracy narratives and relating them to current conflicts has a polarizing effect and generates black-and-white thinking: 'us versus them'. It is particularly perfidious that actual societal and political problems – such as discrimination against Muslims – are taken up in this context and misused to further an agenda aimed at seclusion and exclusion.



Children and adolescents deserve special protection in these matters, as they tend to seek advice, orientation, and community belonging on the net and especially in social media. It is youths' preferred source of information about events, their significance and also their moral interpretation. Islamist groups exploit this situation to put forward ideologically tinted, simplified solutions and to present their own interpretations and distorted facts that are tailored to fit their world view.

Therefore, it is essential to protect and empower children and adolescents. On the one hand, young people need to develop media literacy and an awareness for democratic values, such as diversity; and on the other, it is necessary to take stronger countermeasures when rules protecting minors in the media are violated. Large social media platforms have a great responsibility in this context. They need to assess content themselves and, where necessary, delete material or mark it as questionable, and they should actively contribute to supporting children and adolescents in the use of digital media by providing age-appropriate protective settings.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has already taken important steps with the amendment of the Protection of Young Persons Act 2021 and with the establishment of the Federal Center for the Protection of Children and Adolescents in the Media.

I thank jugendschutz.net for the monitoring outcomes on Islamist extremism in the years 2021 and 2022, presented here. We need insights of this kind – which is why the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs supports jugendschutz.net as part of the Competence Network against Hate on the Net, with funding through the federal program "Live Democracy!".

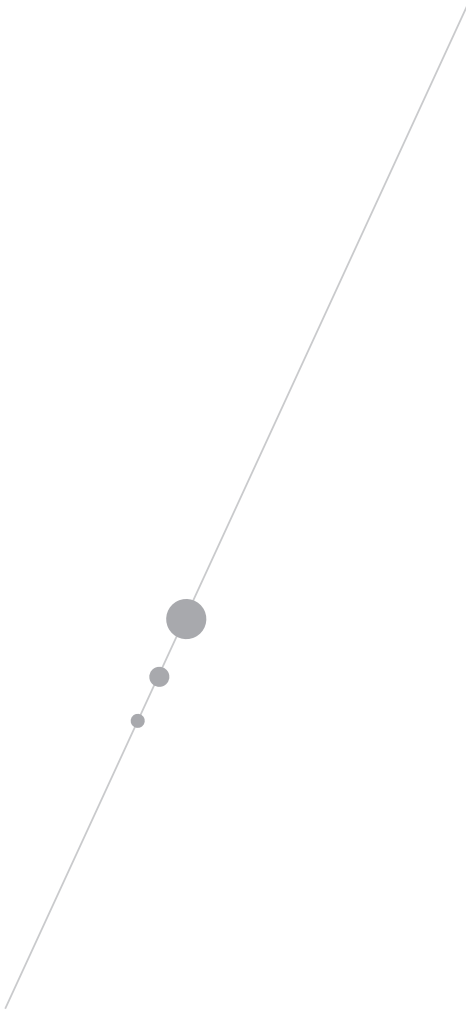
I wish all those involved continued success in their work.

Cordially

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Paus". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lisa Paus, MdB

Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth



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DIMEN SIONS AND TRENDS

Children and adolescents are at risk of encountering Islamist content on the internet. In order to be appealing, today's Islamists make use of pseudo-intellectual talking points and captivating presentation. They latch onto topics such as legitimate criticism of racism or debates over refugees and discrimination as a means of offering as many identification points as possible to young Muslims in Germany. Their internet presence is partly styled after that of seemingly authentic, approachable and successful influencers, linking lifestyle to attractive forms of political commitment. That makes it particularly difficult for young people to become aware of the extremist world view and ideological intent lurking behind the advice and opinion postings, the (fake) news and distorted assessments of current events.

Islamist propaganda on the net is the product of an ongoing adaptation process. This pertains not only to legal regulations and the platforms' Terms of Service regarding online hate speech and vilification, it applies as well to upcoming trends on social media. Islamists dock into the usage habits and visual conventions common among young people and thus quickly gain access to a large audience. The irony or contradiction inherent to the fact that modern, open, web-culture platforms and formats are being laden with misanthropic statements does not seem to trouble the Islamists.

jugendschutz.net examined the communication strategies of such Islamist online propaganda with a particular focus on political events. In the report period from January 2021 to June 2022, among the major events covered were the Gaza conflict of 2021, the power take-over of the Taliban in Afghanistan, and the first months of Russia's invasive war against the Ukraine. In addition, public discourse on issues of gender and sexual identity has been exploited by Islamists for their own purposes. All this figures in their attempt to win over young people to Islamist value systems and ideas of societal and political order.

War in the Ukraine: Conspiracy Beliefs and Revenge Fantasies

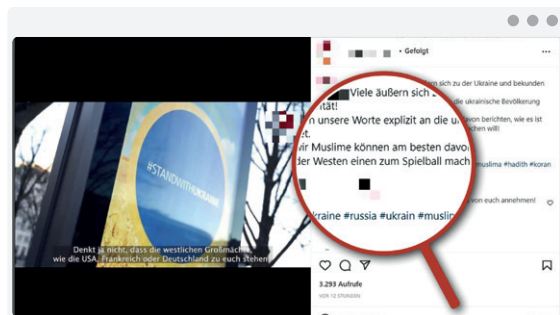
Russia's invasive war against the Ukraine since February 2022 is frequently taken up as a topic of Islamist propaganda online. Islamists portray themselves in solidarity with the Ukrainian population. However, their mention of the suffering in Ukraine serves largely to support the claim that Ukrainians are pawns for Western countries whose support is hypocritical.

Islamists aligned with the organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is banned in Germany, present in their propaganda a stereotyped image of the West as unscrupulous and duplicitous: sacrificing others to advance their own power and acting only nominally in the name of higher values such as freedom and human dignity. Ukraine, they assert, is being used by the West in its confrontation with Russia. Here, the Islamists tap into their victim narrative, which claims that they, as Muslims, are being systematically persecuted by Western countries. In this way, the Islamists

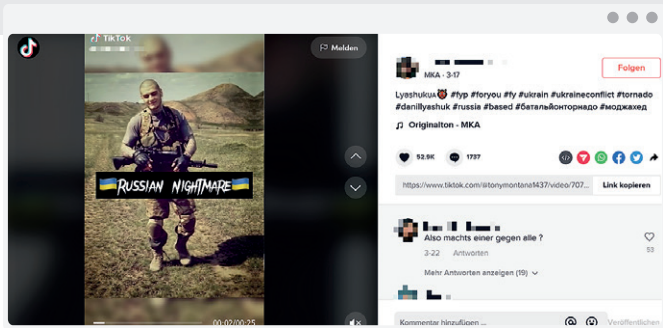
take advantage of widespread solidarity with Ukrainians for their own purposes, putting themselves on a level with the Ukrainians.

In addition, Islamists accuse Western countries of a double standard and discrimination in their response to Ukrainian and Muslim refugees – for example, Syrians. They claim that Ukrainians are preferred and treated better due to their origin, and they quote as proof an overall rejection of Muslim peoples.

Young people in particular have a hard time seeing through such assertions and recognizing that they are part of a systematic indoctrination effort. This is partly due to the fact that this extremist world view exploits legitimate criticisms and existing injustices. Simplified, provocative slogans and headlines reduce issues to polarized, black-and-white interpretations. This type of content on services frequented by young people reaches a wide audience and attracts users to other content leading even deeper into the realms of Islamist ideology.



Islamists portray "the West" as unscrupulous..
(source: Instagram; original not pixelated)



Islamists as “cool” war heroes fighting against Putin.
(source: TikTok; original not pixelated)

“The West” is not the only enemy stereotype cultivated in Islamist propaganda about the war in Ukraine. Jihadist groups on Telegram also celebrate Russian losses: the spin being that Moscow’s military is now subject to Allah’s just punishment for its wars against Muslims in Syria and Afghanistan. The relevant channels share images and videos of destroyed Russian tanks and fighter planes, but also of dead soldiers on both sides. On Telegram, jugendschutz.net repeatedly observed depictions of drastic violence and postings that offend human dignity.

At the same time, Jihadist groups refuse to side with Ukraine against Russia. Ultimately, they defer, saying this is an internal struggle among “kuffar” (non-believers) or “democrats”; true Jihadi fighters would only put their strength into play for Allah and the Sharia.

On TikTok, deceased or captured Islamists who fought against Russia in the past are longingly depicted as glorious heroes in the fight against Putin. Videos with titles such as “Two Men who Terrified Putin” show images of Islamist terrorists who participated in post-Soviet struggles for independence, for example in Chechnya. Underscored by Jihadist war songs, these videos present the purported war heroes as “cool” idols that will appeal to young users. War and participation in militant Jihad are romanticized as attractive and honorable.

Hostility towards LGBTIQ+: Trend Topic of Islamist Online Propaganda

Particularly during the “pride” month of June, increasing numbers of individuals, social and corporate entities have demonstrated solidarity with the LGBTIQ+ community. The term „LGBTIQ+“ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other) encompasses all those who do not identify as heterosexual or “cisgender” (those in the majority, for whom gender and bodily characteristics are fully congruent). Relevant organizations and activists advocate for the rights and for societal acceptance of the LGBTIQ+ minority. The heightened visibility of this topic is perceived by Islamists, as well, and they describe it as a “threat”.



According to the conservative interpretation of Islam, homosexuality is considered a sin. Especially disciples of fundamentalist ideologies regard LGBTIQ+ persons as un-Islamic, unnatural, or unhealthy, and reject them along with the lifestyle they are assumed to adopt. Since June 2021, jugendschutz.net has observed an increasing number of social media postings in which Islamists denigrate or openly vilify these individuals and groups. For example, there was a broad positive response to repression directed against queer persons in Turkey on the occasion of a pride event in June 2022.

On relevant social media profiles, the LGBTIQ+ movement is designated as a “repulsive way of life”, a “wave penetrating the whole world”. LGBTIQ+ is defamed and debased as a kind of sect or a contagious disease. Only partnerships between man and woman with the traditional roles common in Islamic societies are thought to represent the will of God, and can therefore be approved. Furthermore, the ideologues equate homosexuality with pedophilia and pedocriminality, and maintain that it should be prosecuted. Most of all, they insist that children and adolescents be protected from it.

Turkish for “Only Islam protects your family” – as an umbrella holding off the LGBTIQ+ movement.
(source: Telegram; original not pixelated)



Islamist groups also link their agitation against LGBTIQ+ persons to other main topics of their agenda, or rely on prominent figures to attract the attention of young followers. For example, soccer player Mesut Özil was contrasted with his team colleague Josh Cavallo. In 2021, Cavallo publicly revealed that he is homosexual, and Özil took a stand for the Uighur Muslims being persecuted in China. While the soccer club, Arsenal, responded positively to Cavallo's outing, they distanced themselves from Özil's solidarity statement.

Islamists used this in their propaganda, criticizing the "double standard" of Western societies with their purportedly perverted value standards and hostile attitude toward Muslims. The message was: suppressed Muslims and support for them were granted less validity than "unnatural" homosexuals and the commitment to gender equality and sexual diversity. Non-heterosexual orientations, from their point of view, are irreconcilable with the "true faith" and reveal the abject condition of liberal societies. In the comments, jugendschutz.net observed much disparagement of free and democratic values.

Post on the "double standard of the West": with Muslims like Mesut Özil being isolated for criticizing Chinese concentration camps where Uighurs are interred, while Joshua Cavallo received support from FC Arsenal after his outing as homosexual. (source: Instagram; original not pixelated)

People with trans identity are also the target of online attacks in which, for example, surgical procedures towards transition are equated with self-mutilation. jugendschutz.net has documented cases of massive vilification directed towards trans individuals and other LGBTIQ+ persons, even extending to calls for their injury or murder.

In propaganda published in German, content detrimental to the development of young people was also observed – advocating repressions against LGBTIQ+ persons and designating them as a "problem" that needs to be "solved".

First Downplayed, then Adulated: Reactions to the Taliban Take-over

The Taliban's assumption of power in Afghanistan, in August 2021, was covered extensively in Islamist online propaganda. Islamists took advantage of the overall discomfiture to advance their ideological aims. Many young people turned to Islamist groups in the comment areas of various platforms, in an attempt to quickly and simply assess the significance of the events.

jugendschutz.net observed, on these channels, that the actions of the Taliban were being downplayed: relativized under headlines such as "Taliban – good or evil?" in articles that accused Western media of spreading fake news, but also trivialized violent acts and failed to report on the persecution and execution of opposition leaders.

In a majority of cases, Islamists used the situation in Afghanistan as an opportunity for rabble-rousing against the USA, Germany, and "the West" in general. German media were cast as allies in a political agenda hostile to Muslims, meaning that false information about the Taliban was to be anticipated from such media sources. The suggestion was that young people who follow public events predominantly via internet should question their trust in public news sources and instead turn to (supposed) news accounts, for example on Telegram or Instagram, that disseminate Islamist propaganda under the guise of current information.



Taliban figures appearing on Afghani state TV were tolled as "new faces", while their regime of violence was ignored or trivialized.

(source: Facebook; original not pixelated)

Islamists tapped into legitimate critiques of military actions taken by the USA and its European allies, re-directing the anger and frustration engendered by those actions to the advantage of their own world view and as a way of polarizing society. In their perspective, the “Muslim world community” (the so-called “Umma”) is pitted against “the West”, the enemy whose democratic standards are defamed as a “diseased ideology”. They make no distinction between the USA, Europe, their foreign policies, and the German non-Muslim population. The suggestion is that young Muslims, in particular, should not feel that they are a part of German society, but rather seek a sense of belonging solely in the Muslim community.

Supporters of the Islamist organization Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is banned in Germany, see the advancement of the Taliban as a success for all Muslims. They regard it as the onset of a califate, i.e., an Islamic theocracy, and see the Taliban’s actions as heroic and exemplary for all Muslims. Jihadist social media channels openly interpret the power take-over as a “victory for the Sharia”, exhorting followers to pray for the Taliban and for the Jihad fighters in Syria.



“Afghanistan – graveyard of the USA”:
“cool” Taliban fighter set off against
a desperate-looking President Biden.
(source: Instagram; original not pixelated)

jugendschutz.net documented cases of demagoguery directed against those who advocated women’s rights, among others. Many hate speech and propaganda posts hover, however, just below the threshold beyond which they could be prosecuted. The Taliban’s anti-democratic interpretation of the Sharia (Islamic law), with its disregard for human rights, is subtly endorsed and propagated. Initiating legal proceedings against these postings is impracticable, since the Taliban and its insignia are, in Germany, not officially categorized as anti-constitutional.

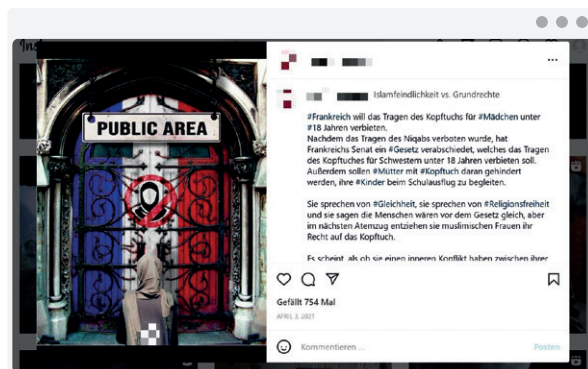
Fake News in Islamist Propaganda: Rabble-rousing against “the West”

Islamist groups with a wide audience range use their social media presence systematically to circulate misleading interpretations of events and to spread fake news. In the spring of 2021, for example, their pages asserted that underage girls in France had been forbidden by law to wear headscarves. While it was true that such a bill had been introduced in the French Senate, at that point in time it had not been conclusively debated or brought to a vote in the National Assembly.

Fake news often is based on information that contains (or once contained) some kernel of truth but has been transformed to further propagandist aims. In this manner,

events and developments are curated and re-interpreted by Islamist activists and recast in an emotionalized context rather than, for example, subjected to differentiated criticism.

Islamists employ fake news to support a smear campaign on social media that denigrates supposedly “Western” values as illegitimate. They portray the image of a society in which Muslims are not welcome. By referring specifically to actual instances of discrimination, they create a foil upon which young people identifying as Muslims can cultivate affinities – with the Islamists all the while portraying themselves as the sole true defenders of Muslims.



Emotionalizing symbolic image: asserting (falsely) that headscarves are forbidden for girls under 18, this post suggests that Muslims are being excluded from the public sphere in France.
(sources: Twitter, Instagram; original not pixelated)

Particularly for young people in need of a feeling of belonging and seeking explanations for injustices they have experienced or observed, these simple patterns of interpretation and lures for identification are attractive. This can result in self-induced societal withdrawal and polarized thinking among young Muslims.



On Facebook and YouTube, jugendschutz.net observed a fake news campaign run by German Islamists aligned with Hizb ut-Tahrir, which has been banned in Germany since 2003. Using hashtags meant to sound proactive, such as #KampfUmUnsereKinder (FightForOurChildren), they attempted to spread disinformation in Germany about alleged mass kidnappings of Muslim children in Sweden, as a way of inciting anger and fear.

Again, in this case, the information was based on a partial truth which had been removed from its original context. There have, in fact, been cases in recent years where social services have removed children from Muslim families. Swedish authorities justified this with the precarious living situation of many due to the rise in immigration since the refugee peak in 2015. Islamists have been exploiting these events to further their narrative of a globally raging “fight against Islam”.

“Sweden: they’re taking away your children!”
Images of distraught children are used to stir up emotions in the Muslim community.
(source: Facebook; original not pixelated)

With this type of sensationalist allegation, abbreviation, and distortion, Islamist groups suggest that Muslim children are being abused in European countries. In a deft rhetorical twist, they evoke the image of a universal threat for all Muslims living in Western countries.

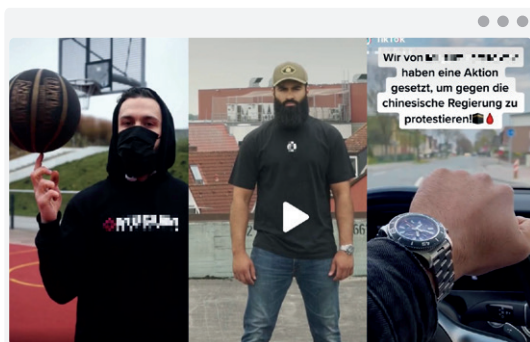
Children and adolescents are at high risk of being manipulated by fake news. False information can cause anxiety and insecurity, but can also foster hate directed toward societal groups. Presenting misinformation as news gives it an aura of seriousness and factuality. The increasingly frequent confrontation with fake news in Islamist online propaganda can generate and reinforce a deep mistrust in the democratic system. Social withdrawal and growing isolation can, in turn, lead to a situation in which nothing but Islamist interpretations will be perceived and believed.

Self-staging of Islamists: Mix of Lifestyle and Agitation to Captivate Youth

Since the beginning of 2021, new and increasingly popular players have been appearing on the net, differing significantly from older groups in their style and behavior. Formal religious titles and long recitations of the Koran are out. The new figures do not present themselves as authorities on doctrine, teachers or preachers, but rather as young and approachable buddies – sporty, stylish, and successful in their jobs.

To achieve this, they rely on social media services with image and video content for immediate consumption, such as Instagram and TikTok. The videos are catchy and short on explicit messaging. They assign blame, e.g. for societal problems, to various other groups, but do not appeal to their viewers to become proactive. Women, incidentally, are rarely to be seen in these postings.

This informal image and the new type of appeal make it easy for young people to identify with the figures they see. The Islamists' appearance is styled along the lines of successful influencers' web presence, seemingly authentic and approachable. Thanks to their self-staging on various social media services, they achieve considerable access to adolescents and cultivate their presence across an array of platforms. Young users are given the feeling of being in a simple and direct exchange with these web figures and of being able, by liking and sharing, to contribute to the success of the young social media activists and their actions.



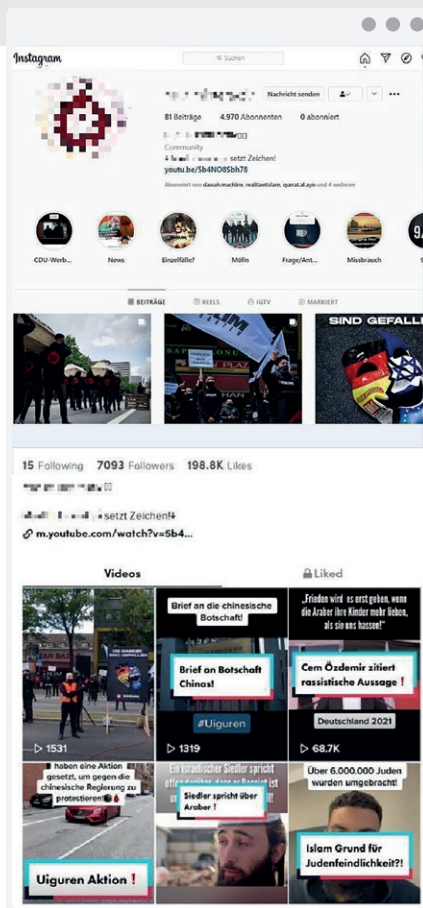
"We've arranged an action to protest against the Chinese government!"
Islamist activists on social media: Young, sporty, with hipster-look and status symbols.

(sources: Instagram, TikTok; original not pixelated)

From the Street onto the Net: Offline and Online Actions Purposefully Combined

Services popular among young people, for example TikTok and Instagram, are also used by Islamists to spread their propaganda as widely as possible over a number of channels. With extensive planning and media arrangements, it is possible to achieve a wide audience range. In one such case, an Islamist group in northern Germany, aligned with Hizb ut-Tahrir, held a demonstration in May 2021 addressing the conflict in the Middle East. While the event was still in progress, activists uploaded video takes onto various social media accounts and received tens of thousands of clicks in a very short time.

Similar combined actions followed, for example protests against the suppression of Uighur Muslims in China. These events were announced in advance, and afterwards presented on social media as successful actions. In such campaigns, the emphasis is not so much on motivating people to attend the event, but rather on its later staging online in a technically sophisticated form that is visually appealing. Instead of featuring content messages, the visual idiom with its emotionalizing effects is given the most attention – as it taps into the visual habits of young people and popular media formats such as hip-hop videos.



In real time, Islamists share content relating to their offline actions on their social media accounts. (sources: Instagram, Facebook, TikTok; original not pixelated)

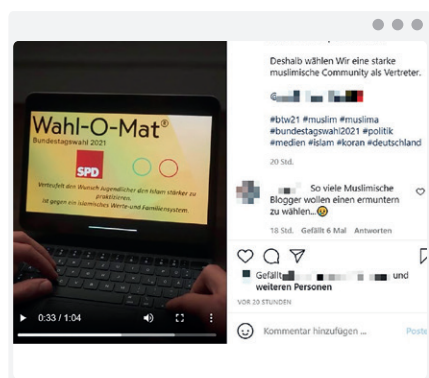
No Room for Democracy: German Federal Election 2021 in the Islamist View

In advance of the German federal election in 2021, Islamist groups called for a boycott. Only Allah has the right to make laws, they argued, and therefore the federal parliament is an un-Islamic institution; Muslims should refrain from working in it or voting in its elections.

With this position, Islamists assert that democracy is irreconcilable with what they see as the only valid form of Islamic conduct in life. Inherent to their call for an election boycott is also the ideology of the Islamist movement Hizb ut-Tahrir, which is banned in Germany and advocates the establishment of a caliphate, a state system modelled in accord with Islamic principles.

In addition, Islamists tried to rectify their rejection of the federal election with an assertion that the German political sphere and parties in general are pursuing an agenda hostile to Muslims. A video produced by Islamists showed a phony version of the German Wahl-O-Mat – an online election tool for voters to compare party programs – which supposedly revealed the anti-Muslim positions of all the German parties. Voting would therefore merely be a choice among different “poisons”. Muslims could only achieve power, a voice, and change as envisioned by the Islamists by participating in a “strong Muslim community”.

Especially young users who identify as Muslims and, in search of political orientation on the net, often encounter posts from Islamist groups are at high risk of manipulation when faced with such material. They are being encouraged to mistrust the German political system and democratic principles, such as the sovereignty of the people or the separation of powers.



A phony Wahl-O-Mat (online tool comparing positions of competing parties) claiming that all the political parties are hostile to Muslims. (source: Instagram; original not pixelated)

Turkish Ultra-nationalism: Genocide Denial and Revanchism

Key players in the Turkish right-wing extremist scene in Germany, for example the militant Grey Wolves, make efforts on all available platforms to win over adolescents with Turkish migratory background to their ideology. It centers around an ultra-nationalism that combines elements of nationalism, chauvinism, and Islamism. In both German and Turkish, young people are urged to set aside their own identity in favor of a purported collective Turkish national consciousness. Reference is made to experiences the adolescents have had in Germany where they were (or felt) excluded.

At the core of the ideology is the exaltation of a supposedly superior “Turk” culture and a homogenous Turkish people said to be thousands of years old. Religious and ethnic minorities living in Turkey today, such as Kurds and Alevi, are rejected. This also applies to members of those groups in Germany. Turkish ultra-nationalists have even outed children and adolescents online as “Kurds” and blackballed them. Persons of other political persuasion, homosexuals, and Jews are also attacked.



Important reference for Turkish ultra-nationalists:
denying the genocide of the Armenians.
(source: Facebook; original not pixelated)

Of particular significance for Turkish ultra-nationalism is its idealization of the Ottoman Empire, which was dissolved in 1922. It is celebrated as a model for the modern Turkish state. One correlate to this is the offensive denial of the genocide perpetrated on the Armenians in 1915/16, another is the revanchist claim to territories that now belong to neighboring countries. In this vein, ultra-nationalists present their own version of history on social media. The danger that it will be adopted by young users is heightened due to the fact that these ideas or arguments against them are otherwise not to be found on the net.

INFRINGEMENTS AND ACTIONS TAKEN

Islamist content and postings on the net can be detrimental to young people in their development or can even personally endanger them. When statutes protecting minors on the internet are violated, that content must be removed quickly to ensure the safety of children and adolescents. In such cases, jugendschutz.net contacts the providers. If the responsible party is identifiable and under German jurisdiction, the case is referred to the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM) or to the Media Supervisory Authority of the respective federal state. Where danger to life and limb is imminent, the case is reported to the relevant police authority or directly to the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA).

Social media services are particularly relevant in the context of Islamist online propaganda. All of the 557 infringements registered by jugendschutz.net in the topical area of Islamism during the reporting period from January 2021 to June 2022 were found on these services. More than 90 % of these offenses occurred on platforms highly frequented by youngsters: YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest. As part of its monitoring effort, jugendschutz.net keeps a continuous watch on their reporting systems (with 485 cases during the reporting period).

In addition to these mainstream platforms, the observation also extended to alternative and default platforms. Here, Islamists assume that there may be less chance of discovery, less regulation, and more access to a niche audience that particularly includes young people. Among these services are SoundCloud or Telegram.

Majority of Cases on Popular Platforms: Providers are Lax about Deleting Content

Most of the infringements documented by jugendschutz.net and leading to countermeasures were found on large platforms with the highest numbers of users. This is unsurprising, since services such as YouTube, Instagram or Facebook play a key role in the overall usage of online media. Especially for children and adolescents, social networks and messaging services are an everyday matter. That makes it all the more important that providers quickly delete impermissible extremist content. Moreover, when the services are being systematically misused for propaganda purposes, the providers must take effective preventive measures. These include age-appropriate default settings on certain functions, as well as reliable verification of the user's age.

jugendschutz.net regularly inspects the status of measures taken on YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, Facebook, and Twitter to protect young users from risky interaction.

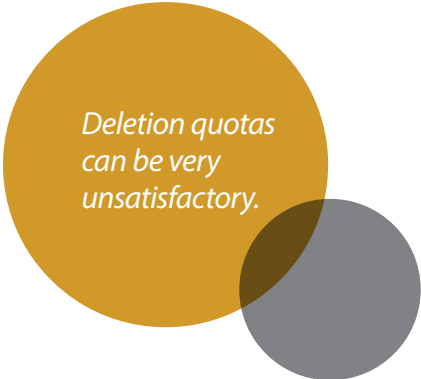
All these services offer users the option to report offensive content. On YouTube, only those who have an account can use the reporting system – although most content can be accessed without an account. On Facebook and Pinterest, it is still not possible to report a profile. Twitter, on the other hand, only enables reporting of offenses listed in the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG). This law does not address violations of youth media protection according to the Interstate Treaty on the protection of minors (JMStV), therefore infringements of this type cannot be reported by users.



*Monitoring and
rapid response
are imperative.*

jugendschutz.net follows the providers' response to complaints in two steps. In the first phase, infringements of the JMStV for which no German responsible party is apparent are reported from a normal user account. After seven days, if the content has not been deleted or blocked, jugendschutz.net steps in as an official agency and requests deletion. For this second phase, there is a separate reporting procedure. After seven more days, there is one more check – to see whether the content has been deleted – and then the outcome is documented.

Of the 485 infringements relating to Islamism and reported in this way in 2021 and up to June 2022, the services deleted or blocked an average of only 31 % of cases in response to a user report. Another 47 % were deleted or blocked after jugendschutz.net established direct contact to the provider. There were significant variations from one service to another: while YouTube with an overall deletion quota of 96 % removed almost all the content that was reported, TikTok deleted only a total of 50 %.



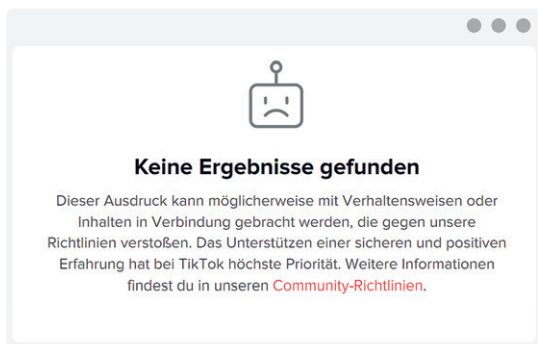
*Deletion quotas
can be very
unsatisfactory.*

Social media services implement various different structural measures to prevent the spread of Islamist content. There are also differences in the platforms' handling of extremist messages. Some are stricter than others in dealing with the same type of infringement. On average, illegal insignia were deleted or blocked in 33 % of the cases reported by users. However, while Pinterest responded in 69 % of cases and Instagram in 35 %, Facebook deleted or blocked only 29 % and Twitter merely 15 % of illegal insignia. The lowest deletion quota was on YouTube, with 1 %.

The number of cases documented varies from one service to another. On Instagram, jugendschutz.net registered 117 infringements during the reporting period, on TikTok there were 30 cases. However, the most frequent type of infringement on all the platforms was the use of insignia of anti-constitutional organizations. Trailing far behind as the second most common type were cases of hate speech/incitement of the people on those sites where they were documented.

In addition to deleting or blocking hate content, service providers also instate preventive measures to reduce the audience range of content that is potentially harmful and detrimental to youth. On TikTok, jugendschutz.net observed that for a number of hashtags frequently associated with Islamist or Jihadist content, the search function no longer yielded

any results. Instead, a notice came up informing the user that the keyword may have been “related to behavior or content” that violated the service’s guidelines. A link to the community guidelines was provided. It appears that TikTok is blocking certain keywords in order to reduce the spread of extremist content on the platform.



“No results found.” Certain hashtags associated with Islamist-Jihadist postings can no longer be searched on TikTok. A link to the explanatory guidelines is provided.
(source: TikTok)

It must, however, be noted that blockage of particular search words will only temporarily result in the limitation of access to undesirable content. To get around a block, alternative hashtags can be used. Furthermore, jugendschutz.net has observed in multiple cases that simply substituting any number for one letter in a word – an alternative spelling trick that is widespread in web culture and called “leetspeak” – sufficed to gain access to the corresponding search results. Also, even after hashtags have been blocked, the offensive content they relate to remains online and can still be accessed using search engines or direct links published on other platforms.

Openly militant-Jihadist appeals were seldom observed by jugendschutz.net. Instead, Islamist content is dominant that upon closer examination could be categorized as anti-democratic or that is directed against specific societal groups. However, it usually remains just below the threshold of prosecutable content.

When assessing such content, one must take the right to free speech and religious freedom into account and weigh these over against the right of children and adolescents to unhindered personal development and, by extension, their right to protection against danger and detriment. In the overall context, the assessment and legal treatment of Islamist online propaganda emerges as quite a complex problem. For strategic reasons, Islamists pay close attention to the limits set by law and by the providers' Terms of Service, as these define what can be said or depicted without ramifications that could include blocking or even legal prosecution.



Measures against extremism can be initiated on various levels.

INFRINGEMENTS DOCUMENTED: 557

Social media services are the essential means of dissemination for Islamist propaganda. 100 % of these cases were found there. Of the 557 violations that were documented, a total of 91 % were located on the large platforms Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube.

For 485 of these violations, the reporting systems were tracked.

	cases	deleted/blocked after user report	deleted/blocked after being contacted by jugendschutz.net	unchanged	overall quota of deletions/blocking
YouTube	92	2 %	93 %	4 %	96 %
Instagram	117	32 %	46 %	21 %	79 %
Twitter*	58	17 %	62 %	21 %	79 %
Pinterest*	100	69 %	7 %	24 %	76 %
Facebook	88	30 %	42 %	28 %	72 %
TikTok	30	20 %	30 %	50 %	50 %
overall	485	31 %	47 %	22 %	78 %

* Service was only included in the ongoing assessment of reporting procedures until 2022
(Deviations from 100% are due to rounding)

SoundCloud



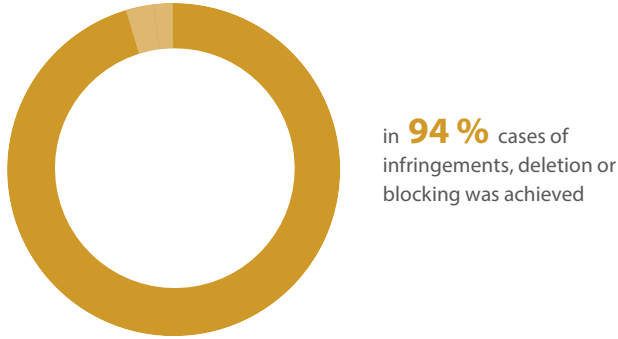
Steam



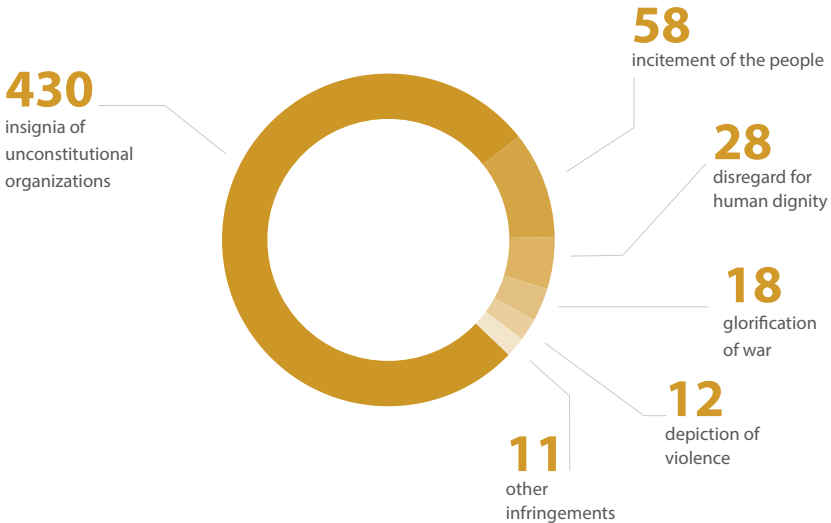
Telegram



Activities toward deletion and prosecution in **557** cases of infringements



Drastic infringements are by far the most frequent type:



About jugendschutz.net

jugendschutz.net is the joint center of the German Federal Government and the federal states tasked with the protection of children and young people on the internet. jugendschutz.net looks closely at dangers and risks in internet services specifically popular among young people and urges providers and operators to design their content in a way that allows children and young people to use the internet free of troubles.

The German youth ministries founded jugendschutz.net in 1997. Since 2003, jugendschutz.net has been linked organizationally to the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM). The work of jugendschutz.net is funded by the Supreme Youth Protection Authorities of the federal states, the State Media Supervisory Bodies and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

jugendschutz.net's hotline accepts reports about violations of youth media protection laws.

Violations on the net can be reported at:

jugendschutz.net/verstoss-melden
hass-im-netz.info/melden