

Extremists continued to exploit the Internet in 2021 by spreading propaganda, exhortations to commit violence, and manuals on several websites and platforms that could assist individuals committing acts of terrorism. In 2021, the Counter Extremism Project (CEP) published 44 extremist content reports containing 250 items on ISIS, al-Qaeda, white supremacists, and the extreme right. While large social media companies have cracked down on terrorist and extremist use of their platforms, significant gaps still exist, especially regarding pro-ISIS and white supremacist use of Meta-owned Instagram. CEP also continued to find pro-ISIS propaganda on Facebook in 2021. In the past year, extremist content on YouTube found by CEP has included advertising for pro-ISIS propaganda websites, neo-Nazi podcasts, and a debate between a notorious American neo-Nazi and a televangelist. Both pro-ISIS propagandists and the white supremacist movement have continued to fundraise and promote cryptocurrency. However, CEP also found some examples of white supremacists who solicited donations via mainstream payment platforms. Pro-ISIS websites have continued to be found throughout the year.

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White supremacist and extreme right propaganda have continued to minimize Covid-19 and, in some cases, has been a rallying call for violence, whether against journalists, vaccine providers, or government experts and personnel. Despite the year beginning with Telegram removing a limited number of white supremacist and neo-Nazi channels, many

deleted channels have returned for significant periods, and the platform has remained an important site for extreme right-wing activity, including encouraging acts of violence and spreading information on homemade weapons and explosives. Telegram’s process for removing chats and channels that violate their [Terms of Service](#) remains opaque and inconsistent. Some white supremacists have sought to increase information and operations security, especially with the change in the U.S. presidential administration. Multiple guides for making explosives or homemade firearms were located on different platforms in 2021.

Three examples of content are provided. The first item is a Telegram channel that posted designs and instructions for 3D printed weapons and firearms components. Despite Telegram removing a prior version of the channel, the communications platform did not in this case. The second content example is one of the multiple instances in which CEP located accounts posting ISIS and pro-ISIS propaganda on Instagram. The final entry is the last video of 2021 from al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, released in November, in which Zawahiri condemns the United Nations. The video was released following the Taliban’s August 2021 takeover of Afghanistan, which sparked fears of a resurgent al-Qaeda presence in the country.

2021 Content Round Up

Pro-ISIS and White Supremacist Content Widely Available on Instagram

On Meta-owned Instagram, CEP found pro-ISIS or white supremacist content, including propaganda made by neo-Nazi groups or encouraging violence, 10 out of 12 months in 2021. Pro-ISIS content included clips from ISIS propaganda videos, such as footage of suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive attacks, executions, advertising pro-ISIS propaganda websites, segments from ISIS’s weekly al-Naba newsletter, and Amaq news statements ([March 1](#), [September 20](#), [October 25](#)).

In many cases, pro-ISIS content posted to Instagram was not ambiguous and included easily identifiable logos. CEP located content that had been on the platform for weeks and content that had been posted within several days. In some cases, violent content posted by pro-ISIS Instagram accounts was still on the platform several days after it was reported for violating the app’s [Community Guidelines](#) ([September 20](#), [October 25](#)).

White supremacist, neo-Nazi, and antisemitic content were also found on Instagram throughout 2021. CEP found clips from [Atomwaffen Division](#) propaganda videos multiple times on the platform ([March 29](#), [May 3](#), [May 10](#), [August 5](#), [September](#)

7, [September 20](#), [November 2](#), [November 8](#), [December 13](#)). Video clips from two other neo-Nazi groups, [National Action](#) and [The Base](#), were also located in April and November ([April 19](#), [November 2](#)).

Content glorifying the Christchurch terrorist and attempting to spread his manifesto were also located in 2021, including one clip containing modified footage from the attack video ([March 1](#), [March 29](#), [April 19](#), [May 10](#), [July 20](#), [September 7](#), [September 20](#), [October 4](#), [November 8](#), [December 13](#)). CEP also found accounts that posted content praising the perpetrator of the 2015 Charleston church shooting and a member of the Atomwaffen Division charged with murder ([May 17](#)).

Multiple pieces of [antisemitic](#) content were also located on Instagram, including content that encouraged violence against Jews, supported Holocaust denial, and spread anti-Jewish memes ([June 1](#), [July 6](#), [August 5](#), [September 27](#)).

ISIS Propaganda and Pro-ISIS Content on Facebook

In 2021, CEP found multiple instances of pro-[ISIS](#) content on Facebook. Accounts were located that posted ISIS propaganda, including videos, photos, text-based propaganda, audio files, and links to ISIS content on other websites ([February 16](#), [April 14](#), [May 10](#), [July 20](#), [September 27](#), [October 4](#), [October 11](#)). Multiple pieces of ISIS propaganda were still available on Facebook several days after being reported to the platform. In two cases, CEP found video clips on the social media site taken from recently released ISIS videos ([January 19](#), [April 26](#)).

Extremist Content on YouTube

In 2021, CEP found two videos on YouTube and one account advertising pro-ISIS websites ([March 1](#), [March 29](#), [November 22](#)). CEP similarly found propaganda made by entities affiliated with white supremacist groups on YouTube, even though the organizations themselves previously had content removed from the video streaming platform ([December 13](#)). YouTube allowed a live-streamed debate between the neo-Nazi [James Mason](#) and a radio and television evangelist, despite previously removing content featuring or promoting Mason ([December 6](#)).

A neo-Nazi podcast made by followers of Mason was also located on YouTube. The podcast was both live-streamed and uploaded to the site as a private video, requiring special access to view it ([June 1](#), [August 31](#), [September 20](#)). When it was reported, YouTube did not remove the podcast for violating their [Community Guidelines](#).

CEP also located a YouTube channel tied to a French-language Telegram account that promoted a fascist street fighting group and had over 115,000 total views. Videos uploaded to the channel included French fascists fighting with

anti-racist activists and training in fighting skills ([September 20](#)).

In May, three YouTube accounts were located that glorified the Christchurch terrorist, either using drawings of the attacker or his photo as their user icon and naming themselves after him ([May 17](#)).

Continued Extremist Use of Cryptocurrency



Cryptocurrency remains incredibly attractive to various extremists, whether due to privacy concerns, being banned from mainstream crowdfunding services, or a desire not to be connected to the banking system.

Online ISIS supporters have encouraged using the cryptocurrency Monero ([June 21](#), [November 16](#)). Monero prioritizes privacy and prevents individuals outside of a transaction from viewing the source, destination, or amount transferred. The request follows one of the main pro-ISIS propaganda websites switching their accepted donations from Bitcoin to Monero in 2020.

In June, a neo-Nazi Telegram channel dedicated to information and operations security released a guide for purchasing cryptocurrency. Users of a chat connected to the channel have also promoted the use of Monero especially. ([March 1](#), [June 7](#))

An American neo-Nazi website that promotes the [National Socialist Order](#) and the work of James Mason requested donations first in Bitcoin and the privacy coin Monero in February, May, and November ([February 8](#), [May 24](#), [November 2](#)).

Several other groups requested cryptocurrency donations throughout 2021, including a fundraiser for an imprisoned Austrian neo-Nazi, an extreme right prisoner support group, a media group affiliated with the [Rise Above Movement](#), and the neo-Nazi group The Base ([March 8](#), [June 1](#), [September 13](#), [November 15](#)).

In Limited Numbers, White Supremacist Groups Fundraise on Mainstream Websites

Despite requests for cryptocurrency, white supremacist groups continued to fundraise on mainstream websites in limited

numbers. Crowdfunding for the Australian neo-Nazi Thomas Sewell and a media project tied to the Rise Above Movement were held on the website Buy Me a Coffee ([March 15](#), [October 18](#)). The Swiss group Junge Tat requested donations sent to an individual's account on PayPal ([December 13](#)).

Pro-ISIS Websites Located Throughout 2021

In 2021, CEP researchers located numerous websites and blogs created to spread ISIS propaganda. The websites used various name servers, registrars, and domain suffixes. Sites frequently hosted ISIS videos, propaganda photo sets, Amaq news statements, and the al-Naba newsletter produced by the group ([March 29](#), [May 3](#), [June 1](#), [June 21](#), [June 28](#)). Pro-ISIS sites were also located on the WordPress, Tumblr, and Blogspot platforms ([May 10](#), [May 24](#), [June 14](#)). Several pro-ISIS websites, including a site dedicated to ISIS nasheeds, were located on the dark web accessible with Tor ([July 6](#), [July 20](#), [August 31](#), [October 4](#)).

White Supremacists, Neo-Nazis, the Extreme-Right Calling for Acts of Violence or Intimidation on Telegram

Throughout 2021, white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and members of the extreme right called for acts of violence and intimidation on Telegram. Many, but not all, of these posts were from a series of "Terrorgram" channels that share similar ideology, graphic style, and emphasis on violence. Two of these channels called for attacks on local and state politicians during the presidential inauguration, and another promoted a domestic insurgency in the United States after President Joe Biden was sworn in to office ([January 19](#), [January 25](#)). In June, a similar channel released a propaganda video encouraging attacks on the electrical grid ([June 28](#)). A coordinated group of Terrorgram channels released two propaganda collections in June and December, both of which advocated for individual acts of accelerationist terrorism against law

enforcement, Jews, Muslims, people of color, and electrical and transportation infrastructure ([June 21](#), [December 20](#)). Both publications were spread widely throughout neo-Nazi Telegram, with the June publication distributed by Telegram-based accelerationist networks claiming a presence in the U.S., U.K., Germany, Poland, Hungary, and Croatia. A Terrorgram channel that encouraged acts of violence against Jews and Covid vaccine providers was deleted by Telegram for violating their Terms of Service after CEP reported it, but a second iteration of the channel was still online for several days after it was reported again, despite posting the same content ([October 25](#)).

White supremacist and extreme right Telegram channels also celebrated and encouraged violence against people of East Asian descent. Following the March 16 Atlanta area shootings where six of the nine victims were Asian-American, several white supremacist chats and channels advocated for anti-Asian violence, and a Proud Boys affiliated media group mocked protests against anti-Asian hate, and users of a chat linked to the media group promoted anti-Asian racism ([March 22](#)). Other Telegram channels have posted content depicting violence against people of Asian descent in an attempt to spur their followers to action ([April 19](#)).

In 2021, neo-Nazi Telegram channels also continued to use the platform to celebrate terrorist attacks and their anniversaries, encouraging additional acts of violence. Examples include glorifying the June 6 London, Ontario anti-Muslim vehicular attack and celebrating the anniversaries and perpetrators of attacks in Christchurch, Oklahoma City, El Paso, and Poway ([June 14](#), [March 22](#), [April 26](#), [August 5](#), [October 4](#)). In May and June, an online accelerationist group also honored an alleged member arrested for reportedly planning a mass shooting at a Texas Walmart ([June 7](#)). In a chat connected to the [Nationalist Social Club](#), participants shared memes encouraging violence and praised a man who had attacked a transgender woman ([September 7](#)).

The Covid-19 Pandemic and the Extreme Right's Promotion of Violence

Throughout 2021, the online extreme right has encouraged acts of violence against those enforcing mask ordinances, reporting on the Covid-19 pandemic, working in healthcare, or approving vaccines. In September, users on 4chan /pol celebrated the murder of a man in Germany by an alleged Covid denier, and users of the same imageboard also called for violence against journalists and media figures for reporting on the pandemic ([September 27](#), [September 13](#)).

Opposition to Covid vaccinations has been a rallying call for the extreme right. A neo-Nazi podcaster and multiple Telegram channels have alleged that the vaccine will eventually cause death ([June 1](#)). A collection of archived posts from neo-Nazi Telegram channels released as a single publication in December stated that "not taking the vaccine is a symbolic revolt against the system, the conspiracy theories don't matter" ([December 20](#)).

A network of white supremacist Telegram channels has also shared alleged home and work addresses of the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and members of the Food and Drug Administration's Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee ([November 2](#), [November 8](#), [November 22](#)). Telegram removed the first iteration of the channel after CEP reported it but did not remove the second version.

Continued White Supremacist Effort to Improve Information and Operations Security

Following the January 6, U.S. Capitol attack and the removal of some white supremacist and extreme right Telegram channels, a prolific white supremacist Telegram channel dedicated to information and operations security urged their followers to improve their habits and prepare for a crackdown ([January 25](#)). The channel, which had approximately 5,500 subscribers in January, grew by over 4,000 members during the year. In 2021, the channel posted instructions for removing a camera and microphone from a smartphone, destroying surveillance cameras, and using burner phones ([February 1](#), [February 16](#), [July 26](#)). Members of the chat tied to the channel answered questions and offered advice to users, including on performing distributed denial of service attacks and which communications programs to use for “illegal activity” ([September 7](#), [December 20](#)).

Also, in February, a media project affiliated with the Rise Above Movement released an online privacy guide, urging their followers to use specific encrypted communications apps ([February 8](#)).

Multiple Examples of White Supremacist and Neo-Nazi Sharing of Instructions for Making Firearms and Explosives Guides

CEP researchers found many examples of white supremacists and neo-Nazis disseminating instructions for making and using firearms or the home production of improvised explosive devices. In some cases, white supremacists spread videos or manuals for building explosives created by [al-Qaeda](#) or ISIS supporters.

Information on the 3D printing of firearms or weapons components were frequently shared on white supremacist Telegram channels ([January 19](#), [April 26](#)). Channels also spread instructions on the homemade production of firearms ([April 14](#)). Telegram removed a channel that posted information on 3D printing firearms. However, a second version of the channel remained on the communications platform ([June 14](#)). A neo-Nazi YouTube channel posted a video on the basic use and maintenance of the AR-15 ([February 22](#)).

In 2021, online white supremacists continued to spread instructions for making explosives. Guides for making bombs were located on imageboards on the dark web, along with tips or suggestions for potential targets, including Covid vaccination sites ([February 22](#), [May 24](#)). There were also multiple instances of instructions for making explosives or incendiary devices posted on Telegram channels ([March 29](#), [May 17](#), [December 6](#), [December 20](#)). In at least two cases, white supremacists posted a video on making explosive devices originally made by ISIS supporters or explosives guides made by [al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](#) ([February 22](#), [March 8](#)). A channel that offered advice on committing arson was also located and has been deleted and returned several times ([August 31](#)).

A Russian language explosives guide was located on the Telegra.ph platform, which was removed by Telegram after CEP reported it ([March 8](#)).



Examples of Content

Extreme Right-Wing Telegram Channel Focusing on Homemade Weapons Found on Telegram After Deletion ([June 14](#))

On June 9, CEP researchers located a Telegram channel that posted designs for 3D printed firearms and weapons accessories and components. The channel had the same URL and is almost identical in its display name and specific description to a channel that posted weapons and explosives manuals reported to Telegram on January 15, 2021, and subsequently removed. The channel located in June was active between March 17 and April 13 and had over 300 subscribers, with several posts being viewed over 1,000 times. The channel was reported to Telegram by CEP, but it was not removed. No reason was given for the discrepancy regarding channel removal.

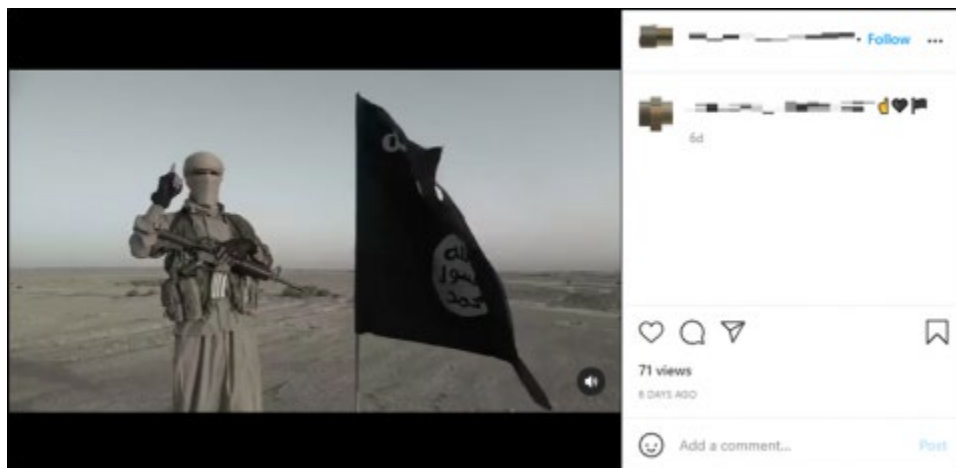


3D image of an AR-15 lower receiver posted by the Telegram channel.

Pro-ISIS Content Located on Instagram ([October 25](#))

The week of October 17 to October 23, CEP located 12 accounts that posted pro-ISIS content on Instagram. Content included footage taken from official [ISIS](#) propaganda videos, including violence such as beheading and assassination, as well as combat footage including the use of suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive attacks. Posted content also included segments taken from ISIS's weekly al-Naba newsletter and Amaq news releases. Two accounts were allegedly connected to pro-ISIS media groups.

The 12 accounts had a mean of 296 followers, with a range of followers between 10 and 1,055. Ten accounts had over 100 followers. The accounts had posted their first piece of extremist content an average of 75 days before they were located, with a range between six and 262 days. Three of the accounts were removed by Instagram four days after they were reported by CEP. Of the nine accounts that were still online four days later, one belonged to a pro-ISIS media group. Graphic content, including a compilation video that showed a beheading taken from an ISIS propaganda video, was still online four days later.



Section from an ISIS propaganda video on Instagram. Screenshot taken on October 21.

Al-Qaeda Released Video Condemning the United Nations

On November 23, [al-Qaeda](#) released a video speech of the group's leader [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) in which he condemned the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and U.N. agencies as being incompatible with Islamic law. Zawahiri stated that the U.N. was created to impose an "irreligious and immoral ideology" on the world and that accepting U.N. membership means that secular law would override Islamic law. He also stated that U.N. membership is recognition of Israel by default. The al-Qaeda leader stated that he is opposed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights because it allows immorality, declares equality between men and women, prohibits harsh punishments, and declares that individuals have the right to change their religion. Zawahiri also condemned the U.N. for hypocrisy in imposing sanctions on Afghanistan while not acting against human rights abuses by Afghan and coalition forces.

The video was released while the [Taliban](#) sought to represent Afghanistan at the United Nations, after the movement's takeover of the country in August 2021. On December 1, a U.N. committee deferred the decision to grant the Taliban a U.N. seat until an unknown future date.



Al-Qaeda video featuring Ayman al-Zawahiri.

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