

October 21, 2019

**Re: Letter in Support of Legislation to Establish a National Commission on Online Platforms and Homeland Security**

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of the Counter Extremism Project (CEP), I am writing to support legislation by Representative Bennie G. Thompson, chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, cited as the “National Commission on Online Platforms and Homeland Security Act.” CEP is a bi-partisan, non-profit policy organization formed in 2014 to confront the growing threat from extremism. CEP is deeply concerned about terrorists’ misuse of online platforms as well as tech companies’ inability to consistently and transparently remove terrorist material from their websites.

Despite tech companies’ promises—typically made after significant pressure from lawmakers—to keep terrorists off their platforms, terrorist content continues to proliferate online and radicalize others. For instance, CEP found clips of the Christchurch attack video on YouTube a month after the shootings occurred.<sup>1</sup> CEP researchers also found that known propaganda videos by neo-Nazi group Atomwaffen Division continue to be reuploaded to the popular video sharing platform.<sup>2</sup> Recently, an American Airlines mechanic charged with sabotaging a plane was found to have allegedly shared videos of ISIS murders.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, tech companies cannot be entrusted to self-regulate, and new laws are needed to ensure public safety and security.

The proposed Commission is a crucial bi-partisan effort to hold tech companies accountable for their actions (or inaction). Its work will help assure that tech companies have clear policies and procedures to moderate content and enforce them consistently and transparently. The Commission’s ability to conduct hearings, subpoena an owner or operator of an online platform, receive evidence, and issue reports are key measures that improve transparency within the tech industry, whose opaque practices have left lawmakers frustrated and American citizens insecure.

The legislation offered by Chairman Thompson is a significant contribution to improving homeland and national security. It is long overdue and we urge you to support it when it is brought forward without weakening amendments.

Very truly yours,



David Ibsen  
Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> “Extremist Content Online: CEP Continues Finding Christchurch Attack Content on YouTube,” Counter Extremism Project, April 17, 2019, <https://www.counterextremism.com/press/extremist-content-online-cep-continues-finding-christchurch-attack-content-youtube>.

<sup>2</sup> “Tech & Terrorism: Atomwaffen Division Video Reuploaded To YouTube After Removal,” Counter Extremism, Project, October 16, 2019, <https://www.counterextremism.com/press/tech-terrorism-atomwaffen-division-video-reuploaded-youtube-after-removal>.

<sup>3</sup> Kris Van Cleave, “American Airlines mechanic charged with sabotaging plane accused of having ISIS videos,” CBS News, September 18, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/american-airlines-mechanic-who-allegedly-sabotaged-plane-accused-of-ties-to-isis/>.