Christchurch summit in Paris calls for stronger action against terrorist content online

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Intermediaries and platforms such as Amazon, Facebook, Google and Twitter have joined forces with 17 national governments in an international effort to eliminate terrorist videos on the Internet. The “Christchurch Call to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online”, issued by the participants in a summit held at the Elysee Palace on 15 May 2019, will result in the tightening of the rules on live streaming. The summit was convened as a direct consequence of the 17-minute Facebook live stream of the terrorist attack carried out in Christchurch, New Zealand on 15 March.

The governments that signed the call to action promised, inter alia, to:

- ensure effective enforcement of applicable laws that prohibit the production or dissemination of terrorist and violent extremist content, in a manner consistent with the rule of law and international human rights law, including freedom of expression;

- encourage media outlets to apply ethical standards when depicting terrorist events online in order to avoid amplifying terrorist and violent extremist content;

- consider appropriate action to prevent the use of online services to disseminate terrorist and violent extremist content.

The online service providers concerned committed, inter alia, to:

- taking transparent, specific measures seeking to prevent the upload of terrorist and violent extremist content and to prevent its dissemination on social media and similar content-sharing services, including its immediate and permanent removal;

- implementing immediate, effective measures to mitigate the specific risk of terrorist and violent extremist content being disseminated through livestreaming;

- reviewing the operation of algorithms and other processes that may drive users towards terrorist and violent extremist content and/or amplify that content.

The governments and online service providers agreed to work collectively to:

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- work with civil society to promote community-led efforts to counter violent extremism in all its forms, including through the development and promotion of positive alternatives and counter-messaging;

- develop effective interventions, based on trusted information-sharing about the effects of algorithmic and other processes, in order to redirect users from terrorist and violent extremist content;

- ensure appropriate cooperation with and among law enforcement agencies for the purposes of investigating and prosecuting illegal online activity in regard to terrorist and violent extremist content.

Before the summit started, Facebook announced that it would be tightening its rules on livestreaming. Any user who breaks Facebook's policies will be immediately blocked from using the service for a set period of time, such as 30 days. The most serious offenders will be permanently blocked. Facebook said that serious offences included forwarding a link to a statement by a terrorist group with no context. Facebook also pledged USD 7.5 million towards new research into image and video analysis technologies designed to detect manipulated content that can bypass the network's automatic detection system.

In their call to action, the summit participants promised that the principles of a free and open Internet, as well as freedom of expression, would be respected.

According to the French president's office, the 17 countries that backed the call included Germany, Canada, Great Britain, Australia and Japan, but not the United States of America.

France has witnessed a series of Islamist-motivated terrorist attacks in recent years, with more than 200 people killed, and is making the fight against the use of the Internet for terrorist and violent extremist purposes one of the priorities of its presidency this year of the G7 group of leading industrial nations.

Call to action of 15 May 2019

https://www.christchurchcall.com/christchurch-call.pdf

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