

Press release: PM joins 'Christchurch Call to Action' on online terror



PM Theresa May joins world leaders and internet companies for a Summit on tackling terrorist use of the internet.

The Prime Minister will today (Wednesday) join world leaders and internet companies for a Summit in Paris on tackling terrorist use of the internet.

The Online Extremism Summit was prompted by the Christchurch mosque attacks in March, which killed 51 people and was livestreamed on Facebook.

The Summit will focus international efforts to stop social media being used to organise and promote terrorism, with attendees expected to sign up to a joint pledge, called the "Christchurch Call To Action", to eliminate terrorist and violent extremist content online.

Speaking ahead of the event Prime Minister Theresa May said:

The sickening attacks on Muslim worshippers in Christchurch shocked the world. That 1.5 million copies of the video had to be removed by Facebook – and could still be found on Youtube for as long as eight hours after it was first posted – is a stark reminder that we need to do more both to remove this content, and stop it going online in the first place.

While we have seen significant progress on this issue since the terror attacks on the UK in 2017, the livestreaming of these attacks exposed gaps in our response and the need to keep pace with rapidly changing technological developments.

My message to governments and internet companies in Paris will be that we must work together and harness our combined technical abilities to stop any sharing of hateful content of this kind.

The event will be co-chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron and New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. Also expected to attend are Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, King Abdullah II of Jordan, Twitter Chief executive Jack Dorsey and Facebook Head of Global Affairs, Nick Clegg.

In her intervention at the Summit the Prime Minister is expected to raise concerns about the growing threat posed by the Far Right, and call for greater progress to develop technical solutions and better collaboration between online platforms.

She will also call for countries to take forward a shared, international approach to regulation, and follow the lead set by the UK's pioneering Online Harms White Paper, which would create a legal duty of care on internet companies for the first time.

On the need for international action the Prime Minister is expected to say:

I want the internet to be a safe place for all our citizens.

That's why we announced plans for new legislation in the UK – creating a legal duty of care on internet companies to keep users safe from harm. This will be backed up an independent regulator with the power to enforce its decisions.

We are the first country to put forward such a comprehensive approach, but it isn't enough for us to act alone.

The internet is global and online threats have no borders. Companies should be held to consistent international standards, so their customers enjoy the same level of protection wherever they live.

The event has been convened as new analysis from the Home Office can reveal a white nationalist and neo-Nazi discussion forum – which is not being named for operational reasons – has seen more than 12 million posts in response to almost one million individual threads, and amassed more than 800,000 visits in just one month, with 10 per cent appearing to originate from the UK.

UK Government analysis has also highlighted how a variety of different platforms and a wide range of anti-establishment themes are being used to lure in a broader audience, and expose them to Far Right material, further underlining the need for enhanced co-operation to keep pace with emerging threats and deal with extremist content before it reaches illegal terrorist thresholds.

On the need to tackle the changing use of the internet by the Far Right, the Prime Minister is expected to tell the Summit:

In 2017 – in the wake of five appalling attacks in the UK – I

called for a much greater co-ordinated global response to fight back against Daesh propaganda online.

Many of the companies here today responded – and, in part thanks to the action you took, last year Daesh propaganda was at its lowest levels online since 2015.

That shows us what is possible. Our work here must continue in order to keep pace with the threat. But we also need to confront the rise of the Far Right online.

The Prime Minister's involvement in the Summit is the latest example of UK leadership on this issue. Previous UK-led action includes encouraging the establishment of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, led by Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Microsoft, which was created in the aftermath of the Westminster terror attack, and the development of new technology to automatically detect Daesh video propaganda.

In September 2017, the Prime Minister joined President Macron and then Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni in convening the first ever UN Summit of government and industry to move further and faster in reducing the time it takes to remove terrorist content online, and to increase significantly their efforts to stop it being uploaded in the first place.

Last month the Government also published its Online Harms White Paper, unveiling tough new measures to ensure the UK is the safest place in the world to be online. In the first online safety laws of their kind, which the UK urges other countries to follow, social media companies and tech firms will be legally required to protect their users and face tough punishment if they do not comply.

Finally, on the ability to find technical solutions the Prime Minister is expected to say:

All of us here recognise the tremendous potential of technology as a force for good in the world. I profoundly believe in the internet as a place for creativity and new ideas.

We have seen what can be achieved when we work together. Collectively, we have the knowledge and expertise to find solutions. Let us be ambitious and steadfast in our determination to ensure that this technology, which can do so much good, isn't weaponised by those who wish to inflict pain and suffering.