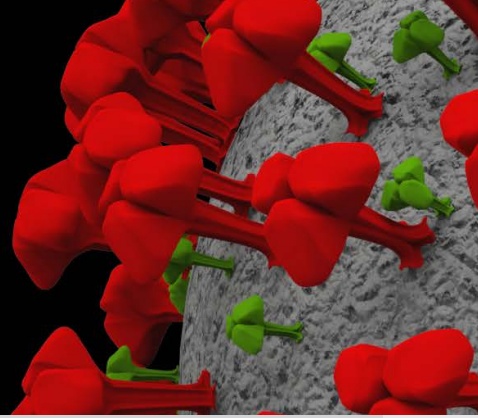


COVID-19

Extremist Activity in the COVID-19 Webinar Q&A



On May 6, 2020, CNA and the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) partnered with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to bring you a webinar focusing on extremist activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this webinar, we received a number of questions that we did not have time to answer. We have compiled these questions and our answers, as well as follow-up resources, in this document.

FOLLOW-UP RESOURCES

- During the webinar, there was a discussion on Zoombombing. Please see these ADL resources on [what Zoombombing is](#), how to [prevent it](#), how Zoom [updated their security](#) to fight zoombombing, and what steps to take during a [Zoombombing incident](#).
- ADL's Hate, Extremism, Anti-Semitism, Terrorism Map (H.E.A.T. Map) is an interactive map plotting information on hate, extremism, anti-Semitism and terrorist acts throughout the country. Find ADL's H.E.A.T. Map [here](#).
- The ADL also maintains an [Anti-Semitic Incident Tracker](#), which can be filtered by state or searched with keywords.
- The ADL also maintains a [Hate Symbol Database](#), which can be filtered by category or searched with keywords.
- Attendees asked about COVID-19 related protests and conspiracy theories surrounding the virus. ADL has written blog posts on [COVID-19 protests](#) and on [conspiracy theories](#).
- The panelists mentioned that ADL has created a variety of resources focusing on fighting hate during the COVID-19 pandemic; please find these [here](#).

QUESTION: CAN YOU DISCUSS “ASTROTURFING” IN THE ANTI-COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS MOVEMENT?

ANSWER: There have been a number of open source articles (i.e., in the [Washington Post](#), the [New York Times](#), the [Guardian](#), [NBC](#), and the [Des Moines Register](#)) alleging the role of well-funded pro-gun, anti-abortion, lobbying groups helping support and/or organize anti-lockdown protest efforts, in combination with a growing (yet still small) grassroots movement. ADL has particularly focused on the extremist elements drawn to these events. Although the earliest protests in March were [largely organized by extremists](#), the latest rounds of rallies have been planned primarily by conservative activists, and have drawn extremists and non-extremists alike. Extremists and conspiracy theorists often use protests or rallies to spread their beliefs, but the pervasive and extensive media coverage of lockdown protests—which actually represent a [minority opinion](#)—has created an irresistible public platform. It has become clear that extremists view these events as an opportunity to share their dangerous messages. These rallies also serve as important opportunities for extremists to connect and develop new networks, and to lay the groundwork for future extremist activity.

QUESTION: ARE THERE ANY ERRORS OR GAPS IN THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THIS SUBJECT?

ANSWER: The extensive media coverage focusing on these various protests nationwide has elevated and magnified the voices of those who are engaged in the lockdown protests. This can create the perception that they represent a substantial voice within the American public, when they actually represent a marginal US sentiment. Additionally, although the overwhelming majority of people drawn to these events are conservative activists and citizens expressing a range of concerns and fears about the economy and their livelihoods, these protests often are too broadly characterized as extremist in nature.

QUESTION: HOW DO YOU REPORT HATE ON FACEBOOK?

ANSWER: Facebook provides instructions for how to report a variety of content [here](#). Per Facebook's [Community Standards](#), hate speech is defined as "a direct attack on people based on what we call protected characteristics—race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, caste, sex, gender, gender identity, and serious disease or disability."¹ Facebook has released this [information](#) on how they decide when content is classified as hate speech and when content will be removed.

The following questions were answered during the Extremist Activity During COVID-19 webinar. To access a recording of the webinar, please click [this link](#).

- [Can you discuss] how to prepare law enforcement to ensure safety in the community? Have you seen increases in anti-police sentiment?
- How are extremists threatening public officials? Is there a focus on attacking government officials?
- Can you please discuss the reports that extremists have been using the "Liberate" protests as a cover for their activities?
- How are extremist organizations using the pandemic to recruit new members?
- Can you discuss reactions to COVID-19 stay-home orders?
- It seems that what I call Socially Accepted Politically Polarizing Bigotry, using such terms as snowflakes, libtards, repugnican, and cuckservative, is on the rise since the pandemic started. Is this true?
- Is the phrase "escalation is acceleration" a reference to accelerationism? If so, would you mind explaining the relevance of that sub-ideology to this crisis?
- With an increase of the use of Zoom in such places as courtrooms, which are open to the public, what are some steps that can be taken to help prevent Zoombombing?

FOR QUESTIONS, CONTACT US AT COVID19_COURTS@CNA.ORG.

¹ https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards/hate_speech.