

Web 'prime tool' for hate groups: Wiesenthal Center

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The logo of social networking website 'Facebook' is displayed on a computer screen. Extremist groups have made the Web their "prime tool" to spread hate and the number of online bigots on Facebook is growing faster than efforts to remove them, the Simon Wiesenthal Center said Wednesday.

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"As the Internet has grown, the escalation of extremist sites has kept pace in number and in technological sophistication," the Los Angeles-based center said in a statement issued to accompany a report on online hate groups.

"The Internet's unprecedented global reach and scope combined with the difficulty in monitoring and tracing communications make it the

prime tool for extremists and terrorists," it said.

"Every aspect of the Internet is being used by extremists of every ilk to repackage old hatred, demean the 'Enemy', to raise funds and since 9/11, recruit and train Jihadist terrorists," the center said.

The center, which was founded in 1977 by Nazi hunter Wiesenthal, a Holocaust survivor, said "this user-generated material increases the viral spread of extremism online and aids in increasing the social acceptability of hate in mainstream discourse."

The center said it had identified "some 10,000 problematic hate and terrorist websites, hate games and other Internet postings."

"Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Hindus, gays, women and immigrants are some of the most targeted groups," it said.

The center said the "greatest increase of digital hate has emerged from Facebook" and Google-owned video-sharing site [YouTube](#) has also seen a "proliferation of extremist use."

It said representatives of Facebook had met with the center and pledged to remove sites that violate the terms of service of the site.

"But with over 200 million users, online bigots have to date outpaced efforts to remove them," the center said. "Some sites have thousands of friends, thus enabling the message of hate to spread virally."

Facebook has removed a number of Holocaust denial sites in recent days and the center said it had received a pledge from the social network to continue working with the center to identify offensive sites.

Facebook has come under pressure in recent weeks from Brian Cuban, a

Texas lawyer and the brother of billionaire Web entrepreneur Mark Cuban, to crack down on Holocaust denial groups using the social network.

In an open letter on Sunday to Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg, Cuban said the Holocaust denial movement is "nothing more than a pretext to allow the preaching of hatred against Jews and to recruit other like minded individuals."

"Allowing these groups to flourish on [Facebook](#) under the guise of 'open discussion' does nothing more than help spread their message of hate," Cuban said.

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