

# Expert says 10,000 extremist websites on the web

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This handout photo of a video grab that was posted on jihadist forums on January 9, 2013, by a group calling itself "al-Sahara Media Foundation" reportedly shows al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) fighters preparing for war in northern Mali. The image was provided by the SITE Monitoring Service. There are more than 10,000 extremist websites on the Internet, according to analysts.

There are more than 10,000 extremist websites on the Internet compared to fewer than 100 countering them, an analyst Tuesday told a conference which stressed the need to rebut militant propaganda.

"In many ways, the terrorists are very successful in cyberspace," said counter-terrorism analyst Rohan Gunaratna, who heads the International Centre for [Political Violence](#) and Terrorism Research in Singapore.

"It is very important for us to build in the next 10 years the capacities and capabilities to counter the increasing presence and the operation of these groups in cyberspace."

Speakers at the International Conference on Terrorist Rehabilitation and Community Resilience said moderate Islamic groups and governments should make a concerted effort to counter extremist propaganda on the Internet.

YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and other social media are increasingly being exploited to spread extremist views, and moderate religious leaders and governments must keep pace to counter their arguments, they said.

Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in a keynote speech that self-radicalisation through constant exposure to radical views online was a "growing phenomenon".

"Jihadist sites and sermons by charismatic ideologue firebrands are just a mouse click away," said Lee, who also stressed the need for closer international cooperation against terrorism.

Some 500 security analysts, academics and religious leaders attended the forum.

Islamic scholar Ali Mohamed, co-chairman of Singapore's Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG), said cyberspace "is shaping up to be the new battleground for hearts and minds".

The RRG counsels and reindoctrinates jailed militants and helps them

reintegrate into society, including some arrested in late 2001 for allegedly plotting to bomb US and other targets in the city-state.

"Terrorists are increasingly exploiting the Internet as a tool for [mass communication](#) and radicalisation," said Ali.

"RRG believes that this is one of our greatest challenges today—to deal (with) and counter the pervasive spread of terrorist ideologies and [extremist](#) views online."

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