



GIFCT

Global Internet Forum
to Counter Terrorism

Remarks from GIFCT Executive Director

2nd UN High-Level Conference of Heads of CT Agencies of Member States

- Let me start by thanking the Under Secretary General Voronkov and the Office of Counterterrorism for the invitation to participate in this panel.
- It's an honor to be a part of such an expert and distinguished panel and I look forward to the discussion.
- As noted, my name is Nick Rasmussen and I am the inaugural Executive Director of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, or GIFCT.
- As most of you will know, GIFCT was formed in 2017 by four large technology companies for the purpose of bringing such companies together in collective effort to prevent terrorists and violent extremists from using the online environment to advance their work.
- By the end of 2019, GIFCT had been established as an independent 501(c)(3) -- a not for profit organization registered in the United States and I came on board as its inaugural Executive Director in late June of last year. Actually, it was exactly one year ago today when I started in this role.
- It has also been our good fortune to work closely with both UN OCT and CTED to advance our work, and we value that partnership with the United Nations community as well as member states.
- I think we would all agree that the problem of online extremism is one that continues to grow both in volume, diversity and complexity.
- While we have long seen terrorist groups and individual violent extremists use the internet to recruit, to radicalize others, to organize and to plot and plan actual attacks, the challenge we face today in the online environment continues to evolve in very troubling ways, in some cases fueled by new extremist narratives driven by misinformation and disinformation.
- Thus there is an urgent imperative to bring tech companies to the table with governments, international organizations, civil society organizations and academics so that practical solutions can be developed and pursued.



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- GIFCT is now made up of 17 member companies, up from 9 at the end of 2019. These 17 technology companies committed to our mission also represent an increasingly diverse group of platforms, showing that it is not just one kind of online service facing terrorist and violent extremist exploitation.
- This has been facilitated greatly by our partnership with Tech Against Terrorism, who mentor and guide applicant companies through the membership process, often helping companies create their first transparency report, or update their terms of service.
- And over the coming weeks and months, you can expect to see more companies joining GIFCT, thereby signaling their commitment to tackle the problem of terrorism and violent extremism on the internet.
- As GIFCT grows, we are looking to include more companies and platforms from around the world. This is not a problem that starts or ends in Silicon Valley or in any one country.
- The problem also extends well beyond social media companies and platforms.
- Terrorists and violent extremists are increasingly making use of other technology platforms, to include storage and file sharing services, online marketplaces, and transportation and accommodation services.
- The work we are doing with this diverse array of companies is focused on creating a healthier, safer, more free online environment.
- At the same time, we understand that expansion of GIFCT's membership and our technological efforts to address terrorist content creates among some of our stakeholders concerns about excessive censorship or abuse of tooling, in ways that might violate the human rights of users.
- When GIFCT members join the organization, they commit not only to work to address terrorist and violent extremist content on their platforms, but also to operate in a context where they respect fully the fundamental human rights of their users.
- That guiding principle for GIFCT has lead us to pursue a couple of different initiatives over the past year since we stood up as an independent organization.
- Perhaps most importantly for purposes of this conversation, GIFCT undertook over the past 6 months to produce a Human Rights Impact Assessment of GIFCT as an organization and of our efforts across all of our work streams.



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- We asked highly regarded experts in the field to review every aspect of our operations, to include membership and governance, with a view to making concrete recommendations on how we can incorporate full respect for fundamental human rights into that work.
- That process has played out over the past 6 months and we just this week are in receipt of the final Impact Assessment, which includes a large number of specific recommendations.
- Those recommendations are informing GIFCT's work as we develop more specific human rights criteria that will guide our membership review process. How we evaluate and consider the merits of additional companies that wish to join GIFCT.
- Beyond that membership element, there are many other recommendations in the assessment that will help ensure that we are living up to our commitment to respect fully the human rights of platform users.
- We intend to publish the full report on our GIFCT website, along with a public response from me as the Executive Director setting forth how we will act on the report to embed human rights considerations in all aspects of our work
- As many of you know, GIFCT holds an annual Summit each summer to make public areas of progress and bring together a multistakeholder forum to help set the agenda for the coming year.
- That event in late July will feature a full discussion of the Human Rights Impact Assessment and we look forward to a robust dialogue on this aspect of our work.
- Beyond the discussion around our Human Rights Impact Assessment, our July Summit will also take stock of GIFCT's 6 Thematic Working Groups, which have labored diligently over the last year to produce concrete outputs on various difficult problems tied to terrorism and extremism online.
- We will also feature discussion on our efforts to expand the taxonomical framework that GIFCT member companies use to share information with each other about terrorist content that has appeared on their platforms.
- I will wrap up with that note about our upcoming Summit event and we hope to see many of you joining us in late July.



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- The progress we've made in our first year as an independent organization has been important but, we are tightly focused on what additional work we can do going forward. The problem continues to evolve and so must we.
- At GIFCT, our goal is:
 - to continue to strengthen the individual and collective capacity of our member companies to prevent and disrupt terrorist and violent extremist activity online,
 - to do so in a manner that recognizes and respects fundamental human rights,
 - - and just as importantly, to bring further transparency to how this important work gets done.

Thank you again for including me in today's discussion.