



Turn off the online hate megaphone

9.08.2024

Open Letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer, First Minister Michelle O'Neill, deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly & Taoiseach Simon Harris.

Civil society groups across Great Britain, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and across the world call on political leaders to act quickly to prevent further violence, protect communities at risk, and hold social media platforms to account for the harms they cause.

No matter who you are, where you come from or how you identify, we all deserve to walk down the street without fear, to be safe and to live a decent life. People across Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland take pride in building welcoming communities.

But far right actors, racists and certain politicians are spreading fear determined to create mayhem, intimidate and silence communities. They try to benefit by making us afraid of each other, scapegoat marginalised communities and try to turn us against each other.

Calls to racist violence were recorded across all social media platforms in the lead up to riots in Belfast and across England, as well as in Dublin last year. In tandem, violent rhetoric, threats, and attacks have escalated and people and communities targeted by hate and racism feel increasingly unsafe and afraid to speak out.

We know that people's real lives are affected by what plays out online. Right now social media and video platforms recommend hateful, false and violent content for people to see. The business model prioritises emotionally manipulative content through algorithms that drive sharing and engagement. This distorts what people believe to be true, manipulates emotions and heightens tensions.

As an immediate break-glass measure, to help stop the spread of hate, platforms must **turn the toxic engagement-based recommender systems off by default and to act rapidly on harmful content on their services**. People should decide what they want to see, not Big Techs algorithms.

Our political leaders must act immediately and bring the senior leadership of **platforms into an open public forum as a matter of urgency to answer questions on their (in)actions over the last weeks** and clarify what steps they are taking immediately to protect people at risk.

We call on our governments to **establish a joint public enquiry** with a range of witnesses, including affected communities, civil society and the senior leadership of social media platforms, specifically Meta, Google/YouTube, X and TikTok. The inquiry will investigate how these companies have been allowed to operate with impunity and shine a light on the harms they have caused, and examine what updated measures are needed to address legislative gaps and enforcement.

Signed

#IamIrish, 38 Degrees, Access For All Ireland, Act Out Youth Theatre, Action for Choice, Act Now, Adamstown Community Summer Camp, Africa Solidarity Centre Ireland, African Advocacy Network Ire, AKAFans, All Out, AMACH! LGBT Galway, Amal Women Ireland, ANDA – Agência de Notícias de Direitos Animais Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores e Comunicadores em Comunicação Popular, Comunitária e Cidadã, Avaaz, Ballyfermot Travellers Action Project, Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication, Belong To – LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland, Bereia – Informação e Checagem de Notícias, Black & Irish, Blessington & District Forum, Blessington Welcomes, Bloody Sunday Trust, Blue Drum – The Arts Specialists Support Agency, Bray Family Resource and Development Project, Bray For Love, Bridging The Gap Ireland, British Association of Social Workers Northern Ireland, Bród na Gaeltachta, Cabra for Youth, Campaign On Digital Ethics (CODE), Center for Information Technology and Development (CITAD), CFF-Ghana, Chayn, Citywide Drugs Crisis Campaign, Civil Society Advocacy Network on Climate Change and the Environment Sierra Leone (CAN-SL), Clare Immigrant Support Centre, Clare Public Participation Network, Clare Solidarity Network, Clean Up The Internet, Clondalkin Travellers Development Group, Clonmel Together, Coalition For Women In Journalism, Comhlámh, Community Policy Forum, Committee on Administration of Justice, Community Work Ireland, Conectas Direitos Humanos, Consortium of Ethiopians, Human Rights Organizations (CEHRO Ethiopia), Cork Communities United, Cork Rebels for Peace, Creggan Enterprises Ltd, Cross-Cultural Conversations, Cultúr Migrant Centre, CWiltshire PR, Defend Democracy, Digital Action, Digital Africa Research and Safety Lab, Disabled Women Ireland, Doc Society, Documentary Film Council UK, Dolmens Climate Change Network, Donegal Intercultural Platform, Dublin Bay North For All, Dublin Bay South Social Democrats, Dublin, City Community Co-op, Dublin City Interfaith Forum, Dublin Council of Trade Unions, Dublin LGBTQ+ Pride, Dublin South West Together, Ecojustice Ireland, EdeNn, Education and Training Hub, St. Andrew's Resource Centre, Ekō, EMERGE – UFF (Research and Production Center on Communication and Emergence, EPIC, Empowering People in Care, European Anti-Poverty Network Ireland, Exchange House Ireland National Traveller Service, Fair Vote UK, Fatima Groups United Family Resource Centre, Federal University of Roraima (Universidade Federal de Roraima), Fermoy For All, Foundation the London Story, Foxglove, Friends of the Earth Ireland, Galway City Community Network, Galway Civic Trust / Dúchas na Gaillimhe, Galway Communities Against Racism and Discrimination, Galway Council of Trade Unions, Galway Scripts and Scribes, Galway Traveller Movement, Gay Community Network, Gay Project, Glitch, Global Action Plan, Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, Global Witness, Good Day Cork, Goshh Ireland, Greek Helsinki Monitor, HateAid, Helping Irish Hosts, Her Loyal Voice, HERE NI, HOPE Not Hate, Human Rights Journalists Network Nigeria, Humanist Union of Greece, HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Inchicore for All, Independent Media Association (UK), India Civil Watch International, INNER CITY ENTERPRISE (ICE), Inner City Organisations Network, INTERCOM – Brazilian Society of Interdisciplinary Communication Studies, Institute for Race Relations, Irish Association of Social Workers (IASW), Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Irish Council

for Civil Liberties, Irish Council for International Students (ICOS), Irish Doughnut Economics Network, Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, Irish Network Against Racism (INAR), Irish Traveller Movement, Islamic Relief Ireland, Joint Ventures, Justice for Prosperity Foundation, Kilcock Integration Group, Kildare Traveller Action, Knockanrawley Resource Centre, Latin America Solidarity Centre, Le Chéile – Diversity Not Division, Legal Dignity, LGBT Ireland, Light Up The Plan Committee, Tipperary Town, Limerick Anti-Racism Network, LINC – Advocating for Lesbian and Bisexual Women in Ireland, Lismore for All, Lourdes Youth & Community Services (LYCS), LOVE Storm – Together against online hate, Lurgan Against Racism, LYFS- Local Youth & Family Service Donegal, Sinn Féin Cumann, Tipperary Town, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, Migrant Voice UK, Minceirs Whiden, Minority Rights Group-Greece, Nasc, the Migrant and Refugee Rights Centre, National Animal Rights Association Ireland, National Women’s Council, National Traveller Women’s Forum, Near Media Co-op / Near FM, Neuro Pride Ireland, NEVER AGAIN Association, Newbridge For All, Newtown Together, Next Billion Network, NI Rural Women’s Network, Ninja Tune Records, North West Migrants Forum, Northern Ireland Women’s Budget Group, Northside Partnership, Offaly Traveller Movement, Open Britain, Outcomers Drogheda, Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre, Parents For Inclusive Education, Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, People vs Big Tech, Phibsboro For All, Places of Sanctuary Ireland, Politiscope, Quintessence Theatre, Radical Film Network, REDE NACIONAL DE COMBATE À DESINFORMAÇÃO-RNCD BRASIL, Rinascimento Green, Roscrea Community Hub, Roscrea Youth Centre, Safe Ireland, ShoutOut, Skein Press, South Tipperary Development Company, Special Initiative for Travellers, Stop Funding Hate (Reliable Media), Support group for Crooksling Asylum Seekers Camp, TALK ABOUT YOUTH PROJECT, Teach na Greine Community House, TEXTGAIN, The Africa-Irish Development Initiative, The A-Team Youth Club (Nenagh), The Great Care Co-op, Threshold, Tipperary Against Racism, Tipperary Anti Racism Network, Tipperary Community Services Centre, Tipperary PPN, Tipperary Residents Network, Tipperary Rural Traveller Project, Tipperary Tidy Towns, TippForChoice, Trademark – Anti Sectarian Unit ICTU. Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENDI), Traveller Equality & Justice Project, Trinity College Dublin Students’ Union/Aontas Mac Léinn Choláiste na Tríonóide, University of Galway Universities of Sanctuary Programme, University of Limerick Human Rights EDI Office, Viramundo, Voicing The Void, Volunteer Ireland, Uplift, Walkinstown Greenhills Resource Centre, Waterford Area Partnership, Waterford Integration Services, Ireland, Welcome Café, Wexford Environmental Network, Wexford Pride, WHAT TO FIX, WhiteTeeth Productions, Wicklow CYPSC, Wicklow, Travellers Group, Women On Docs, Women Press Freedom, Women’s Collective Ireland, Womens Link, Women’s Regional Consortium, Women’s Resource and Development Agency, Women’s Support Network, Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), Youth Work Ireland, Yellow Flag Programme.

“Turn off the online hate megaphone”. HopeAndCourage.ie, 9.08.2024.

<https://hopeandcourage.ie/hate-megaphone>