

DETAILED REPORT

May 2020 Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report





We're constantly working to find and stop coordinated campaigns that seek to manipulate public debate across our apps. In 2019 alone, we took down over 50 networks worldwide for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB), including ahead of major democratic elections. You can find more information about our previous enforcement actions [here](#).

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Over the past three years, we've shared our findings about coordinated inauthentic behavior we detect and remove from our platforms. As part of regular CIB reports, we're sharing information about all networks we take down over the course of a month to make it easier for people to see progress we're making in one place.

WHAT IS CIB?

While we investigate and enforce against any type of inauthentic behavior — including fake engagement, spam and artificial amplification — we approach enforcement against these mostly financially-motivated activities differently from how we counter foreign interference or domestic influence operations. We routinely take down less sophisticated, high-volume inauthentic behaviors like spam and we do not announce these enforcement actions when we take them.

We view influence operations as coordinated efforts to manipulate public debate for a strategic goal where fake accounts are central to the operation. There are two tiers of these activities that we work to stop: 1) coordinated inauthentic behavior in the context of domestic, non-state campaigns (CIB) and 2) coordinated inauthentic behavior on behalf of a foreign or government actor (FGI).

COORDINATED INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR (CIB)

When we find domestic, non-government campaigns that include groups of accounts and Pages seeking to mislead people about who they are and what they are doing while relying on fake accounts, we remove both inauthentic and authentic accounts, Pages and Groups directly involved in this activity.

FOREIGN OR GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE (FGI)

If we find any instances of CIB conducted on behalf of a government entity or by a foreign actor, we apply the broadest enforcement measures including the removal of every on-platform property connected to the operation itself and the people and organizations behind it.

CONTINUOUS ENFORCEMENT

We monitor for efforts to re-establish a presence on Facebook by networks we previously removed for CIB. Using both automated and manual detection, we continuously remove accounts and Pages connected to networks we took down in the past.

SUMMARY OF MAY 2020 FINDINGS

This month, we removed two networks of accounts, Pages and Groups. One of them — from Tunisia — focused on countries across Francophone Africa, and the other one targeted domestic audiences in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. We have shared information about our findings with law enforcement, policymakers and industry partners.

- **Total number of Facebook accounts removed:** 254
- **Total number of Instagram accounts removed:** 240
- **Total number of Pages removed:** 770
- **Total number of Groups removed:** 101

(Updated on June 15, 2020 at 4:15PM PT to reflect the latest enforcement number for Facebook accounts removed.)

NETWORKS REMOVED IN MAY, 2020:

1. **Tunisia:** We removed 446 Pages, 182 Facebook accounts, 96 Groups, 60 events and 209 Instagram accounts. This activity originated in Tunisia and focused on Francophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. This network used fake accounts to masquerade as locals in countries they targeted, post and like their own content, drive people to off-platform sites, and manage Groups and Pages posing as independent news entities. Some Pages engaged in deceptive audience building tactics changing their focus from non-political to political themes including substantial name and admin changes over time. We found this network as part of our internal investigation which linked this activity to a Tunisia-based PR firm Ureputation.
2. **Iraq:** We also removed 324 Pages, 72 accounts, 5 Groups and 31 Instagram accounts. ***(Updated on June 15, 2020 at 4:15PM PT to reflect the latest enforcement number for Facebook accounts removed.)*** This activity originated in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and focused on domestic audiences. This network used fake accounts — some of which had been previously detected and disabled by our automated systems — to post in Groups, impersonate local politicians and political parties, and manage Pages masquerading as news entities. We found this activity as part of our internal investigation linked to Pages we had previously removed for impersonation. Our investigation connected this activity to individuals associated with Zanyari Agency, part of the intelligence services of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraqi Kurdistan.

We are making progress rooting out this abuse, but as we've said before, it's an ongoing effort. We're committed to continually improving to stay ahead. That means building better technology, hiring more people and working more closely with law enforcement, security experts and other companies.

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We removed 446 Pages, 182 Facebook accounts, 96 Groups, 60 events and 209 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [foreign interference](#) which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a foreign entity. This activity originated in Tunisia and focused on Francophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

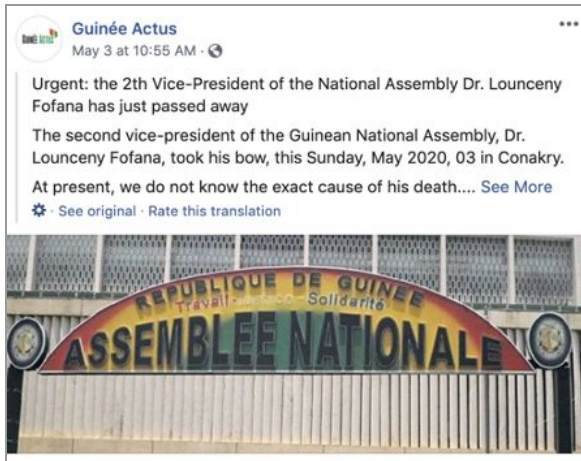
The individuals behind this activity used fake accounts to masquerade as locals in countries they targeted, post and like their own content, drive people to off-platform sites, and manage Groups and Pages posing as independent news entities. Some of these Pages engaged in deceptive audience building tactics changing their focus from non-political to political themes including substantial name and admin changes over time. This network typically posted in French about regional and local news including topics such as tourism, diaspora engagement, politics, candidates and elections in countries across Francophone Africa and Tunisia, and most recently progress combating the coronavirus pandemic in the region.

We found this network as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. Our review benefited from public reporting by AtlanticCouncil's Digital Forensic Research Lab. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to a Tunisia-based PR firm Ureputation.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 446 Pages, 182 Facebook accounts, 96 Groups, and 209 Instagram accounts
- *Followers:* About 3.8M accounts followed one or more of these Pages, about 131,900 accounts joined at least one of these Groups and around 171,500 people followed one or more of these Instagram accounts

- *Events:* These Pages created 60 events on Facebook. Up to 4,300 people expressed interest in at least one of these events. We cannot confirm whether any of these events actually occurred
- *Advertising:* About \$331,000 in spending for ads on Facebook paid for primarily in euros and US dollars.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages:



Translation:

Several African activists denounce the Togolese dictatorship in a forum, using arguable and inaccurate arguments to say the least. #Togo Several African activists denounce the Togolese dictatorship in a forum, using arguable and inaccurate arguments to say the least. Togo, from myths to reality revue-afrique[.]com



L'Observateur Togolais

April 27 at 12:17 PM · 🌐



Donald Trump's congratulations to Togo on his sixty years of independence

On the occasion of the celebration of his diamond anniversary, US President Donald Trump did not fail to congratulate the Togolese people and the head of state, SEM Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé.

In its mail, the White House supports the importance of " remembering the opportunities of joy that unite our peoples ", despite these moments of trouble, when " the whole world is ravaged by a ruthless pandemic "... [See More](#)

⚙️ · [See original](#) · [Rate this translation](#)



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We also removed 324 Pages, 72 accounts, 5 Groups and 31 Instagram accounts that were involved in [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) in Iraq. This activity originated in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and focused on domestic audiences. *(Updated on June 15, 2020 at 4:15PM PT to reflect the latest enforcement number for Facebook accounts removed.)*

The individuals behind this network used fake accounts — some of which had been previously detected and disabled by our automated systems — to post in Groups, impersonate local politicians and political parties, and manage Pages masquerading as local news entities. They posted primarily in Kurdish and Arabic about local and political news including topics like the Kurdish government’s policies, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party and its leadership, criticism of non-Kurdish politicians and public figures, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the Change Movement and the opposition party New Generation, alleged ties between some politicians and Turkey, the Libyan civil war, and ISIS. Most recently, a small portion of this activity included posts about local response to the coronavirus pandemic.

We found this activity as part of our internal investigations into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region linked to Pages we had previously removed for impersonation. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals associated with Zanyari Agency, part of the intelligence services of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraqi Kurdistan.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram: 324 Pages, 71 Facebook accounts, 5 Groups, and 31 Instagram accounts*

- *Followers:* About 4.4M accounts followed one or more of these Pages, around 160 accounts joined one or more of these Groups, and about 22,600 people followed one of more of these Instagram accounts
- *Advertising:* Around \$270,000 in spending for ads on Facebook paid for primarily in US dollars

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages:



Translation:

Confirmed by evidence: Abu Bakr

El-Baghdadi's wife is in Erbil

If false, Let Erbil airport deny it.



Translation:

Caption: Lahur Sheikh Jangi: Trusted by all

PUK supporters



Translation:

Page name: Baghdad In My Blood

Caption: Why does Hezbollah insist on maintaining its positions in Anbar, especially in the desert areas? Hezbollah has more than 13 unofficial border checkpoints between Syria and Iraq, especially at al-Qa'im-al-Bu Kamal. They depend on smuggling prohibited goods and drugs, especially pills, hashish, and weapons.

Text over image: Terrorism