

JANUARY 2021

DETAILED REPORT

# January 2021 Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report

FACEBOOK



We're constantly working to find and stop coordinated campaigns that seek to manipulate public debate across our apps.

## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Over the past three and a half years, we've shared our findings about coordinated inauthentic behavior we detect and remove from our platforms. As part of our 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?

We view CIB 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-government campaigns and
- 2) coordinated inauthentic behavior on behalf of a foreign or government actor.

## 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. Using both automated and manual detection, we continuously remove accounts and Pages connected to networks we took down in the past.

## SUMMARY OF JANUARY 2021 FINDINGS

Our teams continue to focus on finding and removing deceptive campaigns around the world — whether they are foreign or domestic. In January, we removed 2 networks of accounts, Pages and Groups. One network from Uganda targeted people in its own country, and another network originated primarily in Palestine and focused on domestic audiences. We have shared information about our findings with industry partners, researchers and policymakers.

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 closely with law enforcement, security experts and other companies.

- **Total number of Facebook accounts removed:** 426
- **Total number of Instagram accounts removed:** 153
- **Total number of Pages removed:** 210
- **Total number of Groups removed:** 62

## NETWORKS REMOVED IN JANUARY 2021:

1. **Uganda:** We removed 220 Accounts, 32 Pages, 59 Groups and 139 Instagram accounts that originated in Uganda and targeted domestic audiences. Our investigation found links to the Government Citizens Interaction Center at the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology in Uganda. We found this network after reviewing information about a portion of its activity shared with us by researchers at the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensics Research Lab. Given the impending election in Uganda, once we completed our investigation, we moved quickly to take down this network in early January.
2. **Palestine:** We removed 206 Facebook accounts, 178 Pages, 3 Groups and 14 Instagram accounts that targeted Palestine. Our investigation found links to individuals in Palestine

and UAE, in addition to links between a small portion of this network and individuals associated with a recently created marketing firm called Orientation Media in Belgium. We found this network as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region.

# 01

**We removed 220 Accounts, 32 Pages, 59 Groups and 139 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [government interference](#) which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a government entity. This network originated in Uganda and targeted domestic audiences.**

We found several clusters of connected activity where people relied on fake and duplicate accounts to manage Pages, impersonate at least one public figure in Uganda, comment on other people's content, and post in multiple Groups at once to make their content appear more popular than it was. Some of these fake accounts had already been detected and disabled by our automated systems. In the fall of 2020, this network actively promoted the StopHooliganism hashtag across multiple social media services in response to protests against the arrests of the opposition candidate.

This operation posted primarily in English. The first cluster of this activity focused on posting in support of the President of Uganda and the ruling party called National Resistance Movement (NRM). The second cluster posted about Lieutenant General Muhoozi Kainerugaba as a potential future presidential candidate. Finally, the last cluster focused on commenting on the opposition Pages, targeting the National Unity Platform in particular and the opposition candidate Robert Kyagulanyi, in addition to commenting on the Pages of the government of Uganda. Much of this network's posts were amplified by other fake accounts in the network. Some of these Pages reposted content from local news aggregators and pro-NRM blogs.

We found this network after reviewing information about some of this activity shared by researchers at the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensics Research Lab. Given the impending election in Uganda, once we completed our investigation, we moved quickly to take down this network in early January. Although the people behind it attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to the Government Citizens Interaction Center at the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology in Uganda.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 220 Facebook accounts, 32 Pages, 59 Groups and 139 accounts on Instagram.
- *Followers:* About 512,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, about 441,000 accounts joined at least one of these Groups and around 77,000 people followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* About \$5,000 in spending for ads on Facebook and Instagram paid for in US dollars.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these accounts.






**Bobi Wine**  
Dec 10, 2020 2:45am · 🌐

They torture and murder our people with impunity. They wear pride as a necklace and violence as a garment. "What can you do to us?", they ask the citizens whom they have subdued and crushed. Unknown to them, the world is watching! Yes, they tower above all institutions in Uganda, but you never know where justice will come from. Let's continue pushing. Let's continue working. As we rise to reclaim our country, we are grateful to all friends of Uganda who are helping out in every way. Eventually, the victims of oppression will get justice.

[Translate](#)

Album containing 3 item(s)

👍 10000 🗨️ 338 😂 14 🤔 25 🙄 79 🙊 224 🙏 18



I can't trust you with my vote Kyagulanyi you are a symbol of violence and intolerance from day one you entered the political arena.

[Translate](#)

Dec 10, 2020 7:27am



**Bobi Wine**  
Dec 12, 2020 12:21am · 🌐

We spent the night on dusty roadside in the middle of nowhere but the struggle continues. Nextstop Lamwo, Kitgum and Karenga.

[Translate](#)

👍 10000 🗨️ 386 😂 27 🤔 26 🙄 123 🙊 2147 🙏 131



How did you find your way to Kitgum in a middle of nowhere.... Hhhnnnm

[Translate](#)

👍 1

Dec 12, 2020 7:25pm

# 02

**We removed 206 Facebook accounts, 178 Pages, 3 Groups and 14 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#). This network originated primarily in Palestine and targeted domestic audiences.**

This activity relied on individuals primarily in Gaza, and also in Belgium and the United Arab Emirates. They used fake accounts — some of which had been already detected and disabled by our automated systems — to comment, amplify their own content, and manage Pages posing as news outlets. This network also used compromised accounts, which after being inactive for some time, began posting exclusively about politics in Palestine. Some of this network’s accounts posed as locals in the West Bank. Some of their Pages impersonated legitimate think tanks and media organizations in Israel and the UK. The majority of this network’s Pages were inactive, while others often posted identical content and had very limited following when we removed them.

The people behind this activity posted primarily in Arabic and to a much lesser extent in Hebrew. Most of the Hebrew-language posts were about news of the day or non-political in nature. Other posts included content about politics and current events in the Palestinian territories, including the upcoming 2021 election, supportive commentary about the exiled politician Mohammed Dahlan, UAE, and criticism of Qatar, Turkey and the President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas.

We found this network as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals in Palestine and UAE. We also found links between a small portion of this network and individuals associated with a recently created marketing firm called Orientation Media in Belgium.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 206 Facebook accounts, 178 Pages, 3 Groups and 14 accounts on Instagram.
- *Followers:* About 60,500 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, about 600 accounts joined at least one of these Groups and around 2,100 people followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* About \$1,100 in spending for ads on Facebook and Instagram paid for in US dollars.

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



... **Translation:**

Abbas and his government attacked the people of Fatah for not participating in the elections, but this will not work and you will not control them.



**Translation:**

Page name: Rotter net

Sources in the press learned that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas proposed through an international mediator to his rival Muhammed Dahlan in order to resolve the conflict. And the latter refused. No information was obtained about this arrangement.

Jan 22, 2021 8:24am · 🌐

معك للنهاية لن نتراجع خطوة للوراء  
Translate



**Translation:**

With you to the end, we will not retreat one step.

Jan 10, 2021 4:17pm · 🌐

بجهود القائد محمد دحلان ستصل القافلة الثانية من المساعدات الطبية، شكراً جزيلاً لجهودك الطبية  
كتلة فتح البرلمانية #نوار\_الإصلاح\_حركة\_فتح #

Translate



كل الشكر لدولة الإمارات الشقيقة على هذا التبرع الكريم والشكر لتيار الإصلاح بحركة فتح بقيادة محمد دحلان  
كتلة فتح البرلمانية #نوار\_الإصلاح\_حركة\_فتح # . الذي ساهم في وصول القافلة الثانية من المساعدات الطبية

Translate

Jan 15, 2021 10:13am

### Translation:

Post Caption: Due to the efforts of Commander Muhammed Dahlan, the second convoy of medical aid will arrive. Thank you very much for your good efforts  
#Fatah\_Parliamentary\_Bloc  
#Democratic\_Reform\_Current\_Fatah.

Comment: All thanks to the United Arab Emirates for this generous donation, and thanks to the Democratic Reform Current of the Fatah movement, led by Muhammed Dahlan, who contributed to the arrival of the second convoy of medical aid  
#Fatah\_Parliamentary\_Bloc  
#Democratic\_Reform\_Current\_Fatah ...