

JANUARY 2022

DETAILED REPORT

January 2022 Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report



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

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Since 2017, we've published 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 the networks we take down to make it easier for people to see the 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. In each case, the people behind this activity coordinate with one another and use fake accounts to mislead people about who they are and what they are doing, and that is the basis for our action. When we investigate and remove these operations, we focus on behavior rather than content — no matter who's behind them, what they post or whether they're foreign or domestic.

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 2022 FINDINGS

We removed a network that originated in Saint Petersburg, Russia and targeted multiple countries in Africa. We have shared information about our findings with law enforcement, policymakers and industry peers.

As it becomes harder for malicious actors to run effective operations that rely on large networks of fake accounts, we continue to see them attempting to trick real people into amplifying their content, piggy-backing off of someone else's existing audience, rather than building their own. As we shared in our [Threat Report](#) on influence operations, such campaigns often target high-profile people, including [influencers](#) and [journalists](#). Notably, we've seen this tactic in a number of the Russian IRA-associated campaigns in a shift to using cutouts, smaller networks and their own websites, likely in response to detection and repeat removals. We continue to find these networks, including the one in this report, early in their operations before they reach larger audiences.

With these operations continuing to target authentic communities, it's critical for us all, including journalists, influencers and public figures, to keep vigilant and carefully vet information before amplifying it to avoid playing into the hands of threat actors.

We know that influence operations will keep evolving in response to our enforcement, and new deceptive tactics will emerge. To help inform the public and the research community about the changing threat environment, we will continue to expand our security reporting to new areas. Starting next quarter (Q2 2022), we will pilot sharing quarterly threat reports to provide a more comprehensive view into the risks we see across more policy violations including additional problem areas like coordinated adversarial networks targeting people with brigading, mass reporting and other harmful activities.

Finally, as we mentioned before, we've seen an evolution in the global threats and other risks that companies like ours face and a significant increase in safety concerns for our employees around the world. When we believe these risks warrant, we will prioritize enforcement over publishing our findings. While this change won't impact the actions we take against deceptive operations we detect, it means that — in what we hope to be rare cases — we won't be sharing all CIB network disruptions publicly.

NETWORKS REMOVED:

1. **Russia:** We removed a network of three Facebook accounts operated from Saint Petersburg, Russia that targeted primarily Nigeria, Cameroon, Gambia, Zimbabwe and Congo. We detected and began investigating this early-stage operation shortly after it activated. The people behind this activity focused primarily on attempting to contact journalists in Africa to trick them into publishing articles on their behalf. Although the people behind it attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals associated with past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA).

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We removed a small network of three Facebook accounts for violating our policy against [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#). This network originated in Saint Petersburg, Russia and targeted primarily Nigeria, Cameroon, Gambia, Zimbabwe, Congo.

The people behind this activity used fake accounts to create fictitious personas posing as a media editor or as a Europe-based Arab-speaking executive at a PR agency. These accounts had profile pictures likely generated using artificial intelligence techniques like generative adversarial networks (GAN). We saw two short periods of activity — both largely unsuccessful. First, this operation tried to solicit freelance help to write articles about Syria through the Arabic-language journalist Groups. After a period of inactivity, they appear to focus on Africa in an attempt to co-opt media outlets into publishing stories on their behalf about African politics, including criticism of French influence in Africa. We're notifying people who we believe have been contacted by this network.

We found this activity as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior with links to the activity we had [disrupted](#) In August 2020. Although the people behind it attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals associated with the past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency.

- *Presence on Facebook:* three Facebook accounts.

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



منتدى ومقهى الصحفيين السوريين

Nov 9 2020 12:44pm

يبحث موقع اخباري عن صحفيين مساهمين من كل الدول العربية يتمتعون بخلفية قوية في الصحافة.
من يأنس في نفسه الكفاءة فليسارع بالاتصال بنا على الخاص

Translation

Post: A news website is looking for contributing journalists from all the Arab countries with a strong background in journalism. If you're interested, hurry and contact us via private message.



حركة صحفيون بلا قيود - شراع

Dec 14 2020 10:09am

نحن نبحث عن
صحفيين عرب للعمل في موقعنا (كتابة مقالات) بسعر مناسب . ((خاصة من سوريا)) . لمن يهمه
الأمر الرجاء مراسلتي على الخاص. وشكرا

Translation

Post: We are looking for Arab journalists to work for our website (writing articles) for a suitable price. (Especially from Syria). For those who are interested, please send me a private message. Thank you.