

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 2, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson,

As Jewish members of the House of Representatives, we urge you to take immediate action to address the unacceptable and dangerous rise in antisemitism on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. In the aftermath of October 7th, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reported a nearly 1,000 percent rise in antisemitic content on X.¹ This surge in online hate has seen real-world consequences, including violent attacks on American Jews and the vandalism of some of our offices.²

We are further alarmed by X's blasé attitude toward the pervasive and growing problem on its platform – which either represents a lack of concern, or, more nefariously, a tacit endorsement. Several of us have sent letters to both X and Oversight Committee Chairman Comer outlining our concerns and requesting both answers and action.³ However, to date, we have only received unsatisfactory answers from X and deafening silence from Chairman Comer.

You have often touted your affection for the Jewish people and your concern about antisemitism around the country.⁴ We ask that you take some action to show that your words have meaning. In that spirit, we implore you to hastily instruct Chairman James Comer to conduct an Oversight hearing on X's profiteering and amplification of antisemitic content, as well as its potential violations of US sanctions law by providing premium perks to designated terrorists. Such a hearing would be a critical first step in combating the alarming rise of antisemitism and the influence of foreign terrorist groups in the United States.

We have been thoroughly disappointed in Chairman Comer's failure to heed our concerns. In fact, Chairman Comer has not only failed to investigate X's likely violations of US sanctions law, but he's instead investigating entities, including NewsGuard, which have extensively

¹ Center for Technology and Society, *Online Antisemitism Increased after Hamas Attack*, Anti-Defamation League (Nov. 9, 2023), <https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/online-antisemitism-increased-after-hamas-attack>.

² Annie McDonough, Brooklyn Museum director not the only prominent New Yorker targeted with vandalism, City & State New York (June 14, 2024) <https://www.cityandstateny.com/politics/2024/06/brooklyn-museum-director-not-only-prominent-new-yorker-targeted-vandalism/397404/>.

³ Letter from Reps. Daniel Goldman, Jamie Raskin, et al., to Linda Yaccarino and Elon Musk (Nov. 21, 2023) (on file with author), available at <https://goldman.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressmen-dan-goldman-jamie-raskin-demand-elon-musk-x-leadership-enforce>; Letter from Reps. Jamie Raskin and Daniel Goldman to Chairman James Comer (Mar. 11, 2023) (on file with the author), available at <https://goldman.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-goldman-oversight-committee-ranking-member-raskin-call-oversight>.

⁴ Speaker Mike Johnson (@SpeakerJohnson), X (Apr. 22, 2022, 12:29 PM), <https://x.com/SpeakerJohnson/status/1782446726441291929>.

reported on X's propagation of and profiteering on misinformation and terroristic content.⁵ You have publicly raised concerns about possible terror cells in the United States.⁶ For the sake of consistency, and given that an American company appears to have provided tangible services to designated terrorists in violation of U.S. sanctions law, we ask that you raise these concerns directly with Chairman Comer and ensure that he holds a hearing on this troubling pattern of conduct.

X's Amplification of & Profiteering on Antisemitic & Terroristic Content

Our initial letter to X, on November 21, outlined several major problems with the company's conduct, including X's profiteering on, and amplification of, terroristic, antisemitic, and violent content.⁷ As that letter explained in detail, the Tech Transparency Project (TTP) documented numerous examples of X Premium accounts openly spreading Hamas propaganda videos—the same videos featured on the website of the military wing of Hamas, the Ezzedeen al-Qassam Brigades (EQB), which has been designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States.⁸ These videos, which included Hamas branding and imagery, featured scenes of bloodied bodies on the ground, gunmen shooting at buildings with automatic weapons, and rocket and drone attacks on Israeli tanks and vehicles.

A separate report released by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) further confirmed and quantified the spread of official Hamas propaganda videos on X.⁹ In a 24-hour period beginning on October 11, ISD researchers identified 128 posts from 45 unique accounts “containing glorification and support for terrorist content on X. Researchers described uncensored videos depicting the desecration of corpses and “CCTV footage in which civilians are shot and subsequently dragged from their vehicles.”

To make matters worse, there are clear indicators that X has profited off the spread of Hamas's terrorist propaganda—both through monthly subscription fees collected from some propaganda spreaders, and through ads displayed in replies to posts by both Premium and regular accounts.

TTP's report named specific X Premium accounts that remain active. ISD researchers reported that at least 20 out of 45 accounts it found to have posted terrorist propaganda were X Premium accounts, meaning that they are paying for verification without any formalized vetting process and being promoted by the website's algorithm.

⁵ Press Release, Committee on Oversight and Accountability, *Comer Probes NewsGuard's Impact on Protected First Amendment Speech, Government Contracts* (Jun. 13, 2024), <https://oversight.house.gov/release/comer-probes-newsguards-impact-on-protected-first-amendment-speech-government-contracts%EF%BF%BC/>.

⁶ Aaron Rupar (@atrupar), X (Jun. 13, 2024, 8:57 AM), <https://x.com/atrupar/status/1801237535403712824?s=43&t=id92Un6EUPNcg-xHG18qZg>.

⁷ Letter from Reps. Daniel Goldman and Jamie Raskin to Linda Yaccarino and Elon Musk (Nov. 21, 2023) (on file with author), available at <https://goldman.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressmen-dan-goldman-jamie-raskin-demand-elon-musk-x-leadership-enforce>.

⁸ Tech Transparency Project, *X Premium Accounts Spread Hamas Propaganda Videos of Attack on Israel*, (Oct. 12, 2023) <https://www.techtransparencyproject.org/articles/x-premium-accounts-spread-hamas-propaganda-videos-of>.

⁹ Moustafa Ayad and Tim Squirrell, *Illegal, violent terrorist content related to Hamas-Israel conflict reaches millions on X*, Institute for Strategic Dialogue (Oct. 13, 2023) https://www.isdglobal.org/digital_dispatches/illegalviolent-terrorist-content-relating-to-hamas-israel-conflict-reaches-millions-on-x/.

Following the initial letter to X, the company sent a formulaic response that was not only insufficient but insulting.¹⁰ Notably, X did not outline any substantive policy changes to its continued amplification of terroristic propaganda, nor did it agree to end its profiteering on said content.

X Appears to Have Violated US Sanctions Law

Two months after X's response, another TTP report revealed that X appears to have violated US sanctions law by selling its Premium services to U.S.-designated terrorist groups and other sanctioned entities,¹¹ including Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah and the terrorist group's deputy Secretary-General Naim Qassem, both of whom are listed as "Specially Designated Nationals," (SDNs) under the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).¹²

As you are aware, transactions with SDNs are prohibited absent a license granted from OFAC.¹³ TTP identified numerous accounts of other U.S.-sanctioned entities, such as those belonging to Iran's Press TV and Russia's Tinkoff Bank, with gold checkmarks—a signifier of X's "Verified Organization" status which, until January 2, 2024, cost a minimum \$1,000 per month.¹⁴ Further, the X account for Nasrallah was "ID verified," which would have required him to send an image of a government-issued ID and photograph to X, confirming that the X user was in fact Nasrallah.¹⁵ An "ID verified" user receives additional benefits, including prioritized support from X Services.¹⁶

Following the TTP report, X removed Nasrallah's blue check and shortly after, the Nasrallah account tweeted, "Anyone knows [sic] why the premium subscriptions were cancelled? It is very

¹⁰ Letter from X Corp. to Reps. Daniel Goldman, Rep. Jamie Raskin, et al. (Dec 1, 2023).

¹¹ Tech Transparency Project, *X Provides Premium Perks to Hezbollah, Other U.S.-Sanctioned Groups*, (Feb. 14, 2024) (online at <https://techtransparencyproject.org/articles/x-provides-premium-perks-to-hezbollah-other-us-sanctioned-groups>). The TTP report highlighted the following X accounts: @alahdnews2; @English_AIAhed; @AhedFrench; @Moqawamah_eng; @PressTV; @PDeclassified; @Tasnimnews_EN; @alalam_arabic; @nexo_latino; @alnoujaba; @ansarollah2; @alosbou; @ShahidAlmasirah; @TvAlmasirah; @MubasherMasirah; @SaadiQaddafi; @BasharSabaawi70; @SabawiSaad; @ntvru; @tinkoff_bank; @PadDolat; @IRNA_1313; @IrnaEnglish; @MizanNewsAgency.

¹² Office of Foreign Assets Control, *Sanctions List Search: Hasan Nasrallah* (online at <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/Details.aspx?id=2686>) (accessed Feb. 27, 2024); Specially Designated Nationals are individuals and companies owned or controlled by, or acting for or on behalf of, countries that are targeted for sanctions. Their assets are blocked pursuant to various sanctions programs, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with them. (Office of Foreign Assets Control, *Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN) Human Readable Lists* (Feb. 27, 2024) (online at <https://ofac.treasury.gov/specially-designated-nationals-and-blocked-persons-list-sdn-human-readable-lists>)).

¹³ Office of Foreign Assets Control, OFAC Licenses (online at <https://ofac.treasury.gov/faqs/topic/1506>) (accessed Feb. 27, 2024).

¹⁴ Office of Foreign Assets Control, *Sanctions List Search: Press TV* (online at <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/Details.aspx?id=45062>) (accessed Feb. 27, 2024); *Office of Foreign Assets Control, Sanctions List Search: JSC Tinkoff Bank* (online at <https://sanctionssearch.ofac.treas.gov/Details.aspx?id=44259>) (accessed Feb. 27, 2024); Prior to January 2, 2024, "Verified Organizations" was only offered at the Full Access tier, which is \$1,000 per month and \$10,000 per year (X Help Center, *About X Verified Organizations* (online at <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-x/verified-organizations>) (accessed Feb. 27, 2024)).

¹⁵ X Help Center, *ID Verification Policy & Privacy* (online at <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/verification-policy>) (accessed Feb. 27, 2024).

¹⁶ *Id.*

annoying when the amount of words required to express your thoughts are limited to a number.”¹⁷ This tweet suggests that the terrorist leader received Premium subscription services from X, which allows for users to post more than 280 characters.¹⁸

Additionally, it appears that some of these sanctioned entities may have potentially received advertising revenue from X. X policy allows users who pay for Premium services to receive a share of the revenue generated from advertisements displayed in replies to the user’s posts and, according to the TTP report, nearly 70% of the identified accounts featured advertisements in replies to posts.¹⁹ If X provided any of these accounts revenue as part of its advertisement revenue sharing policy, it would have violated U.S. law by conducting financial transactions with sanctioned entities.

On March 11, 2024, in light of this reporting, some of us sent a letter notifying Chairman Comer of our grave concerns and requested he hold a congressional hearing to examine these potential violations.²⁰ We have yet to receive a response from the Chairman.

Latest Revelations on X’s Antisemitism

The plague of antisemitism presently continues to run rampant on X. Earlier this summer, NBC News found that X has been running ads on at least 20 racist and neo-Nazi hashtags more than 18 months after X Chairman Elon Musk said that he would demonetize hate posts.²¹ The advertisements included a litany of unmistakably antisemitic hashtags, such as #whitepower, #whitepride, #unitethewhite, as well as more fringe slogans like #groyper (a movement of online white nationalists).

This comes after dozens of major advertisers have fled the app over concerns of pervasive antisemitism and lack of brand safety on the platform, including most recently Hyundai, who ceased advertising on X after an ad from the automaker reportedly appeared adjacent to an antisemitic and pro-Hitler post on the social media site.²² The antisemitic post came from a verified “premium” account, which read: “Hitler was not the demon, you are. We defeated the wrong enemy in WW2. Holocaust was a LIE. Israel was created by the Rothschilds. IDF comprises of 3 Terrorist Orgs Judaism HATES Christianity. Judaism = Satanism.”²³ To this day, this account remains active on X’s website.²⁴

¹⁷ Hassan Nasrallah (@SH_NasrallahEng), X (Feb. 17, 2024) (online at https://twitter.com/SH_NasrallahEng/status/1758933894932664433). Hassan Nasrallah (@SH_NasrallahEng), X (Feb. 17, 2024) (online at https://twitter.com/SH_NasrallahEng/status/1758933894932664433).

¹⁸ X, *About X Premium* (online at <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-x/x-premium>) (accessed Feb. 27, 2024).

¹⁹ *Id.*; *X Provides Premium Perks to Hezbollah, Other U.S.-Sanctioned Groups*, Tech Transparency Project (Feb. 14, 2024) (online at <https://techtransparencyproject.org/articles/x-provides-premium-perks-to-hezbollah-other-us-sanctioned-groups>).

²⁰ Letter from Reps. Jamie Raskin and Daniel Goldman to Chairman James Comer (Mar. 11, 2023) (on file with the author), available at <https://goldman.house.gov/media/press-releases/congressman-goldman-oversight-committee-ranking-member-raskin-call-oversight>.

²¹ David Ingram, *Elon Musk's X App Ran Ads on #whitepower and Other Hateful Hashtags*, NBC News (Jun. 6, 2024, 9:48 AM), <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/social-media/elon-musk-x-twitter-antisemitism-hashtags-trending-hate-rcna151945>.

²² Ramishah Maru, *Hyundai is the Latest Brand to Pause Advertising on X due to Antisemitism*, CNN (Apr. 19, 2024 9:58AM), <https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/18/business/hyundai-pause-advertising-x-antisemitism/index.html>.

²³ Nancy Levine Stearns (@nancylevine), X (Apr. 17, 2024, 4:04 PM), <https://x.com/nancylevine/status/1780688883430330465>.

Unfortunately, this conduct is part of a larger pattern of acceptance and tacit approval of such antisemitism by X. In April, another NBC News report found that at least 150 paid X subscribers at the time were sharing pro-Nazi content, including speeches by Adolf Hitler, and likely sharing in revenue generated by advertisements on their accounts.²⁵

In the wake of the attempted assassination of former president Trump, antisemitic conspiracies spread like wildfire on Mr. Musk's social media platform. These conspiracy theories mostly centered around the false claim that Thomas M. Crooks, the shooter, was “a Jewish man” with some posts insinuating that he was recruited by the Israeli government to assassinate the former president.²⁶ Other posts on X suggest that the counter sniper team intentionally let Crooks fire at the former president before neutralizing the shooter — adding that a red wrist band, worn by a member of the counter sniper team, was a “Jewish Kabbalah bracelet.”²⁷ There is no evidence to corroborate any of these antisemitic conspiracy theories, and yet, these tweets remain on the platform and have not been corrected or even subject to community notes.

Mr. Musk, himself, has been a purveyor of this antisemitic content. In response to a bigoted post in November claiming that “Jewish communities (sic) have been pushing the exact kind of dialectical hatred against whites that they claim to want people to stop using against them,” Mr. Musk shamefully responded, “You have said the actual truth.”²⁸ For clarity, the post was propagating the vile conspiracy theory that Jews are attempting to change the demographics of Western democracies by importing “hordes of minorities” into those countries.²⁹

Less than two weeks ago, Mr. Musk proudly perpetuated one of the oldest and most dangerous antisemitic conspiracy theories – that wealthy Jews are puppet masters secretly manipulating others. Replying to an X account named @endwokeness, Mr. Musk suggested that Vice President Kamala Harris was the “puppet” of Alex Soros, son of philanthropist George Soros, who orchestrated President Biden's withdrawal from the 2024 election.³⁰ It is disgraceful and unacceptable for the owner of a popular social media platform to blatantly promote antisemitism to his 190 million followers.

Ending the Weaponization of Antisemitism

You have made the argument that antisemitism has no place on campus, and that there must be “accountability” and “consequences” for those who perpetuate such hate.³¹ We agree. If violent

²⁴ @pepedownunder, X, https://x.com/pepedownunder?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor.

²⁵ David Ingram, *Verified pro-Nazi X accounts flourish under Elon Musk*, NBC News (Apr. 16, 2024, 5:00 AM), <https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/social-media/x-twitter-elon-musk-nazi-extremist-white-nationalist-accounts-rcna145020>.

²⁶ @SilentlySirs, X, (Jul. 14, 2024, 7:23 PM), <https://x.com/SilentlySirs/status/1812628993755283889>.

²⁷ @grimbogroyper, X (Jul. 14, 2024, 12:10 AM), <https://x.com/grimbogroyper/status/1812338935453917619?s=46&t=vW8A4Zd2iCLQyDgQOZ1Qxw>.

²⁸ David Goldman, *Elon Musk agrees with antisemitic X post that claims Jews ‘push hatred’ against White people*, CNN Business (Nov. 17, 2023, 11:46 AM), <https://www.cnn.com/2023/11/15/media/elon-musk-antisemitism-white-people/index.html>.

²⁹ @breakingbaht, X (Nov. 15, 2023, 3:49 PM), <https://x.com/breakingbaht/status/1724892505647296620>.

³⁰ Elon Musk (@elonmusk), X (Jul. 21, 2024, 3:48 PM), <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1815111716994228662?s=43&t=id92Un6EUPNcg-xHG18qZg>.

³¹ Speaker Mike Johnson (@SpeakerJohnson), X (Apr. 21, 2024, 5:49 PM), <https://x.com/speakerjohnson/status/1782164781002113290?s=43&t=id92Un6EUPNcg-xHG18qZg>;

and antisemitic rhetoric does not belong on campuses — and we agree that it does not — then sanctioned terrorists and neo-Nazis, who incite violence against and call for the extermination of the Jews, certainly should not be welcome on one of the largest social media platforms in the world.

If you care about the Jewish people and oppose antisemitism, as you claim, we ask that you heed our concerns and reiterate our call to direct Chairman Comer to host a public hearing with Mr. Musk and other X officials to explore the facilitation of antisemitic content, including potential sanctions violations, on the platform.

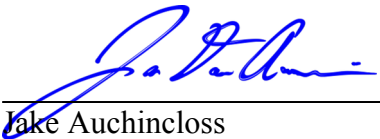
In the spirit of good faith and bipartisanship, we hope that you accept our request.

Sincerely,

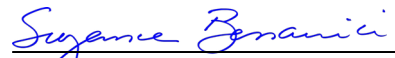
Sincerely,



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

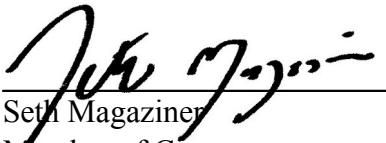


Greg Landsman
Member of Congress

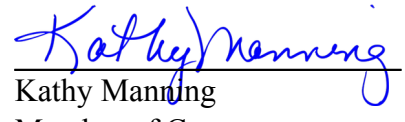


Mike Levin
Member of Congress

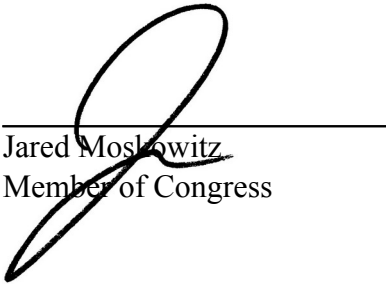
Speaker Mike Johnson (@SpeakerJohnson), X (Apr. 29, 2024, 4:16 PM),
<https://x.com/speakerjohnson/status/1785040426652602862?s=43&t=id92Un6EUPNcg-xHG18qZg;>
Speaker Mike Johnson (@SpeakerJohnson), X (May. 14, 2024, 3:03 PM),
[https://x.com/speakerjohnson/status/179045791111503885?s=46.](https://x.com/speakerjohnson/status/179045791111503885?s=46)



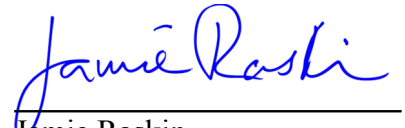
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress




Kathy Manning
Member of Congress




Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress




Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress




Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



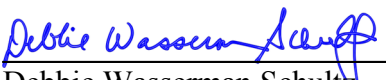
Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



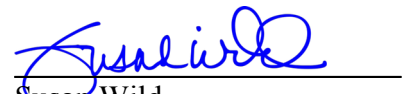
Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Susan Wild
Member of Congress