



# PERSPECTIVES

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## Twitter Favors Dictator Khomeini over President Trump Against US Interests

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Twitter, which has spent most of Donald Trump's presidency avoiding a public stand on his use of the medium, has slapped a "public interest notice" on his tweets about the rioting that is occurring in the US in the wake of the violent death in police custody of a black man, George Floyd. According to Twitter, Trump warranted this notice on the grounds that his tweets violate its rules regarding the glorifying of violence. Yet Twitter has nothing to say about the tweets of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, whose [violent posts](#) include hate speech and antisemitism and openly incite rioting and killing. Ted Cruz has called for the launch of a criminal investigation into Twitter's violation of US [sanctions against Iran](#).

Twitter is unfairly targeting Donald Trump by applying standards to him that it does not apply to other world leaders, including dictators and violent despots whose interests are directly opposed to those of the US. The online medium has begun to [fact-check](#) the president's posts regarding mail-in ballots and has applied warning labels to two of his recent tweets. By disrupting the president's equal access to voters, the site is in effect attempting to interfere in the 2020 election.

Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) claims that Twitter has violated US [sanctions against Iran](#) and called for an investigation into the company. The White House [slammed](#) Twitter for coming after the president while letting "terrorists," "dictators," and foreign propagandists abuse its platform with impunity. President Trump has signed an executive order targeting the "selective censorship" of social media and online platforms in an effort to defend free speech from the "[gravest danger](#)."

According to the [Twitter site](#), a blue "verified" badge lets people know that an account of public interest is authentic. Twitter has a long history of verifying accounts that run counter to the interests of the US. For instance, it verified the

account of @Ikhwanweb, which has been used by the Muslim Brotherhood to promote violence. In 2015, that account published a call for violent jihad and “martyrdom,” and it regularly spreads anti-Israel, anti-Jewish, and anti-Western hatred online.

On January 9, 2017, a [lawsuit](#) was filed in the Southern District of New York against Twitter for providing support and resources to Islamic State that led to the murders of Alexander and Sascha Pinczowski, killed by the terrorist group in Brussels, and Nohemi Gonzalez, killed by the group in Paris. These murders were all conducted by an Islamic State cell operating out of Brussels.

“If you want to talk to a terrorist, you don't need to send an email to anybody,” former FBI director James B. Comey [said](#) shortly after the Paris attacks. “You just need to follow that terrorist on Twitter, and then maybe engage in Twitter direct messaging with that terrorist...It works as a way to crowdsource terrorism, to sell murder.” In August 2012, Congressman Ted Poe, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Terrorism, nonproliferation, and trade, complained about Twitter’s failure to shut down terrorist accounts and argued that Twitter’s allowing of such accounts violates US law. According to the FBI, the internet and, in particular, the use of social media are key “factors [that] have [contributed](#) to the evolution of the terrorism threat landscape” since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Twitter has [weak security measures](#) as well that allow ISIS supporters to hijack dormant Twitter accounts for the promotion of jihad. This hacking was uncovered by Eric Feinberg, founder of the Global Intellectual Property Enforcement Center. He developed technology to detect communications by terrorists in Arabic and other languages, content that is often missed by the platforms. “What concerns me is that I can find this, but the companies don't seem to be taking a proactive enough stance against it. There needs to be more technological analysis by the companies. It needs to be prevented from happening in the first place,” Feinberg said.

As President Trump [put it](#), free speech faces a grave danger: the handpicking by online platforms of speech that Americans may or may not hear. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube should not have the power to shape the public’s interpretation of events by censoring, deleting, or “disappearing” information. It is not their role to control what people can or cannot see. Instead of protecting American interests, Twitter censors the president of the US and gives Ali Khamenei and many others free rein to promote violence.

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