



Press Release HateAid gGmbH

## One election - hate by the thousands

### Report: Facebook fails to remove toxic content ahead of the French Presidential elections

Paris and Berlin, 10 March 2022

**Hate speech in the French presidential race: Facebook failed to remove 70% of highly toxic comments, fuelling violence against migrants and women in the public debate ahead of the April election. This is the finding of an alarming report published today by online safety and anti-racism and antisemitism NGOs HateAid (Germany) and LICRA (France).**

Exactly one month before the French Presidential election, Facebook is full of hate: Thousands of insulting, racist, antisemitic, and misogynist comments can be found publicly on the platform for all to see. And even worse, the platform does not remove them upon notice and therefore fails to enforce their own content moderation rules. This gives a free pass to **hate attacks by the far-right against political candidates on the platform. The strategy has been widely used to silence politicians online. It threatens the democratic debates held online which are especially crucial during the electoral process.**

This is shown by an experiment of HateAid and LICRA. A team of researchers reported illegal hate speech found on Facebook, posted mainly under public pages of far-right groups in France, through the platform's own reporting channels. They monitored what happened over a period of 7 days. **The results are alarming: Facebook failed to remove 70% of the reported hate speech.** In many cases Facebook also failed to inform users about their decision concerning the reported content.

#### **Anna-Lena von Hodenberg, CEO of HateAid:**

"Facebook is again failing to enforce their own rules against hate speech. The digital violence we see on the platform right now before the French presidential elections directly cultivates hatred and intolerance. In doing so, Facebook is giving a stage to groups that try to harm the electoral process. The platform should be considered complicit."

HateAid has already conducted a similar analysis [in the run-up to the German federal elections](#) in September 2021. The results were equally shocking: A few months after the Capitol Hill insurrection, Big Tech put the German election at risk. Now this seems to be repeated in France.

## **Gilbert Flam, president of the European and International affairs of LICRA**

“In this particular period for France and with the presidential elections coming up, LICRA considers that the IT platforms are responsible when it comes to moderating online hate speech. The recent court decision in France regarding Twitter's moderation implies the importance of social media in combatting the hate phenomena. Indeed, the court ordered Twitter to give activists full access to all of its documents relating to its efforts to fight hate speech on the social network. We, as civil societies with expertise on online hate speech, have common expectations and hope that the DSA will commensurate with our expectations.”

The report includes policy recommendations to the European Union (EU) lawmakers working on the Digital Services Act, that is currently being negotiated in Brussels. Based on the findings and evidence on poor content moderation practices, NGOs propose to strengthen user's rights: Those who report illegal hate speech, but face a rejection by the platform, should have access to a second assessment by the platform, through internal complaint mechanism. Furthermore, HateAid and LICRA argue that NGOs should be included among the actors that can be accredited to access platform data for research purposes. NGOs are often in the forefront of exposing rights violations and harmful societal impacts of the Tech companies.

### More information:

You can find the complete report on [our website](#).

### LICRA

The International League Against Racism and Antisemitism (LICRA) was initiated in 1927, it is an INGO that has the participatory status at the Council of Europe. LICRA is an organisation combatting racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination. LICRA is profoundly attached to the values of freedom, equality, fraternity and is promoting the ideal of universalism. Its actions are based on a network of volunteers present in Europe and especially in France. LICRA is a member of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations of the Council of Europe, in which she is presiding the “Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights” committee. LICRA has been very active in the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) and in the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS) since their creation.

### HateAid gGmbH

The non-profit organisation HateAid gGmbH was founded in 2018 and has its headquarters in Berlin. HateAid offers support for victims of digital violence: legal cost funding, emotionally stabilising initial, safety, and communication counselling. The founding managing director is Anna-Lena von Hodenberg. Advocating for victims of digital violence at the European level is part of the Landecker Digital Justice Movement of the Alfred Landecker Foundation. For more information about HateAid gGmbH visit our website: <https://hateaid.org/>

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