



Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism Call for Proposals

Briefing Papers on the Feasibility of Broadening our Hash-Sharing Database's Taxonomy Framework

[The Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism \(GIFCT\)](#) is seeking proposals for briefing papers on the feasibility of expanding the taxonomy of hashed content included in our [hash-sharing database](#). Building on [earlier work we sponsored on this topic](#), GIFCT is seeking proposals from international experts to be published as a series [on our website](#). While GIFCT programmatic efforts have always focused on terrorism and violent extremism in all its forms, the scope of the hash-sharing database has been more limited due to both the sensitive nature of sharing hashes and the need for an agreed-upon taxonomy framework. We plan to use this collection of papers—representing a diversity of views and perspectives—to inform our ongoing efforts to make the database more relevant to the global terrorist and violent extremist challenges we face today.

Background:

The hash-sharing database was [developed in 2017](#) as a way for tech companies to come together and share hashes of terrorist content in a way that respected privacy, security, and the independence of each company to apply its own moderation and terms of service. Since no universally agreed-upon definition of terrorism by governments, international bodies, or academic experts exists, the companies involved in the consortium decided to use the United Nations Consolidated Sanctions List as the foundation for the hashed content included in the database.

The only type of hashed content added to the database outside of the U.N. List (which includes perpetrator content linked to U.N.-designated entities) is when a [Content Incident Protocol](#) (CIP) is activated. The CIP was launched in the aftermath of the 2019 attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. GIFCT members recognized the need to be able to share hashes of content in the low-prevalence-high-risk scenario of a real-world crisis whereby a perpetrator or accomplice live-streams or optimizes content depicting attempted or actual loss of life with the expectation such content will go viral. In the case of a CIP, GIFCT creates a separate label within the database for perpetrator-related content to be shared. Since Christchurch, only two such incidents—the attacks in Halle, Germany in October 2019 and Glendale, Arizona in May 2020—have met that threshold. While the U.N. List and CIP have helped companies scale-up efforts to surface violating content on their own platforms and apply their terms of service accordingly, GIFCT recognizes that this is a limited subset of terrorist and violent extremist content.



The Call

GIFCT is looking to sponsor up to five proposals from international experts to develop briefing papers on how to approach the expansion of the current hash-sharing taxonomy framework to ensure increased parity and understanding of how terrorist and violent extremist content manifests. Briefings are encouraged to highlight existing research and might include suggestions about other designation lists. Exploring the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches or lists is encouraged.

We ask that experts think both in terms of taxonomies and severity frameworks that could assist GIFCT members in decision-making. Proposals should not be limited to photo or video content in hashed form as there may be other ways to expand frameworks beyond hashes. However, proposals should understand that GIFCT will continue to respect privacy and human rights in the application of any expanded framework, meaning that the sharing of user data or personally identifiable information is out of scope. As part of any proposal put forward, experts should therefore identify and consider any potential human rights and/or privacy implications that would attach to their proposals.

Please note: Just as terrorist and violent extremist definitions vary from country to country, tech companies apply different definitions and employ various list-based approaches to create their own content moderation policies. GIFCT respects the independence of its member companies and recognizes that, ultimately, each company will make content removal decisions based on their own terms of service.

Deadlines and Format

Proposals should be submitted to outreach@gifct.org with email subject "Taxonomy Expansion Proposal" by Friday, March 19, 2021 and should include:

- Brief overview of how you plan to approach framework and/or taxonomy expansion
- Brief bio(s) of the researcher(s) involved

Once proposals are chosen, authors will have six weeks to develop and submit their briefing papers. Briefing papers are expected to be roughly 4,000 - 6,000 words, should be submitted as Word Documents, and are welcome to include infographics or visuals. GIFCT respects the independence of expert output and, apart from grammatical or clarity edits, will not look to make substantive edits. Successful proposals will be rewarded \$5,000 upon submission of their final paper.

In addition to publishing the series on our website, GIFCT will also hold a virtual convening around the results so that experts can present their approaches to tech companies and relevant stakeholders.

For any questions or submissions of proposals, please email outreach@gifct.org.