

SEPTEMBER 2021

DETAILED REPORT

# September 2021 Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report

FACEBOOK



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

## PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

Over the past four years, we've shared 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 all networks we take down over the course of a month to make it easier for people to see 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. There are two tiers of these activities that we work to stop: 1) coordinated inauthentic behavior in the context of domestic, non-government campaigns and 2) coordinated inauthentic behavior on behalf of a foreign or government actor.

## COORDINATED INAUTHENTIC BEHAVIOR (CIB)

When we find domestic, non-government campaigns that include groups of accounts and Pages seeking to mislead people about who they are and what they are doing while relying on fake accounts, we remove both inauthentic and authentic accounts, Pages and Groups directly involved in this activity.

## FOREIGN OR GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE (FGI)

If we find any instances of CIB conducted on behalf of a government entity or by a foreign actor, we apply the broadest enforcement measures including the removal of every on-platform property connected to the operation itself and the people and organizations behind it.

## 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 SEPTEMBER 2021 FINDINGS

Our teams continue to focus on finding and removing deceptive campaigns around the world — whether they are foreign or domestic. In September, we removed two networks from Sudan and Iran. We have shared information about our findings with industry partners, researchers and policymakers.

In our previous [threat reporting](#), we called out the rise of domestic influence operations, which are particularly concerning when they combine deceptive techniques with the real-world power of a state. Both networks we removed in September continued this trend and were in some way linked to the military organizations in their respective countries. Each targeted domestic populations to praise the military and criticize opposing factions. This is the first covert influence operation we've disrupted in Iran that focused almost entirely inside the country and was run by individuals linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The tactics both of these operations used to promote their campaigns were not particularly novel or sophisticated. In each case, we observed them posing as local news entities to lend credibility to their efforts. It appears that the network in Iran purchased fake followers to appear more popular and trustworthy. However, as we've seen in the past, gaining inauthentic followers does not necessarily translate into successful authentic engagement. In fact, some people who came across this content on our platform called out these accounts as fake.

We know that influence operations will keep evolving in response to our enforcement, and new deceptive behaviors will emerge. We will continue to refine our enforcement and share our findings publicly. We are making progress rooting out this abuse, but as we've said before – it's an ongoing effort. We're committed to continually improving to stay ahead. That means building better technology, hiring more people and working closely with law enforcement, security experts and other companies.

- **Total number of Facebook accounts removed: 759**
- **Total number of Instagram accounts removed: 268**
- **Total number of Pages removed: 130**
- **Total number of Groups removed: 84**

## NETWORKS REMOVED IN SEPTEMBER 2021:

1. **Sudan:** We removed 116 Pages, 666 Facebook accounts, 69 Groups and 92 Instagram accounts in Sudan that targeted domestic audiences in that country. We found this activity as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region and linked it to the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary group operated by the Sudanese Government.
2. **Iran:** We removed 93 Facebook accounts, 14 Pages, 15 Groups and 194 Instagram accounts in Iran that targeted primarily domestic audiences in that country, particularly in the Lorestan province. We found this activity as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region and linked it to individuals associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

# 01

We removed 666 Facebook accounts, 116 Pages, 69 Groups and 92 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [foreign or government interference](#), which is [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#) on behalf of a foreign or government entity. This network originated in Sudan and targeted domestic audiences in that country.

The people behind this activity used fake accounts — many of which were already detected and disabled by our automated systems — to manage Groups and Pages, post, comment and react to their own content to make it appear more popular than it was. Some of the Pages purported to be independent news entities. Some of the accounts posed as freelancers, journalists and students in Sudan, and some accounts used celebrity photos as their profile pictures. This network also amplified the official content by the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF). In fact, commentary about RSF and its former head appeared to be among the most common themes in this network’s posting activity. They posted in Arabic about news and current events in Sudan, including under the brand Sudan Live News.

We found this activity as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. Although the people behind it attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary group operated by the Sudanese Government.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 666 Facebook accounts, 116 Pages, 69 Groups and 92 Instagram accounts.
- *Followers:* About 1.1 million accounts followed one or more of these Pages, around 153,000 people joined one or more of these Groups and about 28,000 accounts followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* Around \$200 in spending for ads on Facebook and Instagram paid for in US dollars and euros.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these accounts and Pages.


**نبض الثورة**  
Yesterday at 6:08 AM · 🌐

قال نائب رئيس مجلس السيادة الانتقالي الفريق محمد حميدتي يجب إشراك الجميع من أجل تصحيح المسار، مؤكداً تمسكهم بالتزامهم بتنفيذ اتفاق سلام جوبا والترتيبات الأمنية يجري الآن الإعداد لها وأضاف: هناك مشاكل مالية، وكل الأطراف مقصرة، وتابع: "نحاول إدخال الناس في الترتيبات الأمنية فوراً".

The Deputy Speaker of the Transitional Sovereignty, Mohamed Hamidti, said everyone should be involved in order to correct the course, assuring their commitment and commitment to implement the Juba Peace Agreement and security arrangements are being prepared for it

He added: There are financial problems, and all parties are default, and he continued: " We are trying to get people into security arrangements immediately "

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**عاجل**

**حميدتي: ملتزمون بتنفيذ اتفاق جوبا والترتيبات الأمنية**

👍 2 · 6 Shares

Translation

Page name: The Pulse of the Revolution

Image overlay: Breaking news: Hamidti is committed to implementing the Juba agreement and security arrangements

**Sudan Live News** سودان لايف نيوز  
3h · 🌐

**عاجل**

أعلن كيان شباب الجعليين الذي يتزعمه العمدة عبدالباسط أبو عبدالله، عن اعتصام مفتوح وإغلاق طريق التحدي عند محلية شندي اليوم الأربعاء الساعة التاسعة صباحاً.


وقال شباب الجعليين أن الخطوة تأتي تضامناً مع ولايات السودان في الإغلاق الشامل لتحقيق المطالب... See More

Urgent

The youth entity led by Mayor Abdul Basit Abu Abdullah announced an open sit-in and the closing of the challenge road at Chand's local on Wednesday at nine am.

The move comes in solidarity with the states of Sudan in lockdown to achieve demands, young people said... See More

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👍 45 · 16 Comments 7 Shares

Translation


Page name: FFC News

FFC News - إف إف سي نيوز 5h · 🌐

رئيس مجلس السيادة وأعضاء الحكومة يؤدون صلاة الجنازة على شهداء جهاز المخابرات العامة  
#ffc\_news

The chairman of the sovereignty council and members of the government perform funeral prayers on the martyrs of the General Intelligence Service  
#ffc\_news

🔒 · Hide original · Rate this translation



👍👎 41 6 Comments 56 Shares

Translation

Page name: Sudan Live News

# 02

**We removed 93 Facebook accounts, 14 Pages, 15 Groups and 194 Instagram accounts for violating our policy against [coordinated inauthentic behavior](#). This network originated in Iran and targeted primarily domestic audiences in that country, particularly in Lorestan province.**

The people behind this activity relied on fake accounts — many of which were already detected and disabled by our automated systems — to post primarily on Instagram as local news entities, named after cities in Lorestan. Some of these accounts posed as Kurds, including young Kurdish women, and others purported to be supporters of an exiled militant opposition group Mojahedin-e Khalq (MEK) in an apparent attempt to build audiences among these different communities. This operation focused primarily on Instagram and appeared to have purchased fake followers for its accounts to make them appear more popular than they were. Some of the accounts went through significant name changes and attempted to contact people on Instagram. They also re-posted content related to Iranian state media and government officials.

The individuals behind this operation posted primarily in Farsi about local news and current events in Lorestan, including encouraging voter turnout in the 2020 Iranian elections and criticizing MEK, the Kurdish nationalist movement, US and Saudi Arabia.

We found this activity as part of our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region. Although the people behind it attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 93 Facebook accounts, 14 Pages, 15 Groups and 194 accounts on Instagram.
- *Followers:* About 4,300 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, around 3,600 people joined one or more of these Groups, and about 590,000 accounts followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these accounts and Pages.







## Translation

**Post:** Attention attention attention attention. According to the launch of the campaign not to the fake map of Iran. Publishing the same fake map in the virtual space leads to good. This map will be taken, respected users please. Take action towards publishing the original map of our dear country. . .

**Image overlay:** Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, the map of Iran, Khorasan, Golestan, Mazandaran, Manshah, Semnan, Razavi, Isfahan, Iraq, Khuzestan, Khorasan, Afghanistan, × Dear IRAN users, use original maps with the aim of preventing the further spread of fake map.