

The Risk of Foreign Influence on the UK Far-Right and Anti-Muslim Hate

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A CASE STUDY

Direct Action

The Dangers of Foreign Influence on
Domestic Far-Right Networks Online



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Foreword

This briefing presents urgent and credible evidence of how contemporary far-right extremism is no longer confined to domestic networks or isolated online ecosystems, but is increasingly shaped by transnational actors, foreign influence, and rapidly advancing digital technologies. It demonstrates how hostile online activity, when left insufficiently regulated and inadequately disrupted, can progress swiftly from propaganda to criminal coordination and real-world harm.

The briefing arrives at a critical juncture for public policy. The convergence of encrypted communications, synthetic media, and low-cost content automation has fundamentally altered the threat landscape. Extremist groups no longer rely solely on organic recruitment or traditional propaganda dissemination. Instead, they can now mass-produce disinformation, simulate engagement through bot and online networks, and exploit moments of national grief or social instability to accelerate radicalisation and mobilisation. These conditions dramatically reduce the time available for detection, intervention, and safeguarding.

This briefing also exposes the growing challenge of foreign ideological contamination within domestic extremism. While we may never conclusively establish the identities of those who controlled the network examined in this study, the use of Russian hacktivist aesthetics, foreign protest footage, non-native linguistic patterns, and externally sourced extremist manuals points to the erosion of national boundaries in the digital extremist sphere. This transnationality complicates traditional counter-terrorism frameworks, which remain largely structured around domestic threat models.

Above all, this briefing document highlights the real human consequences of regulatory inertia. Behind every online incitement post, every propaganda video, and every encrypted message thread lies a real-world target: a mosque, a community centre, a family, or an individual. The transition from online incitement to physical vandalism, arson threats, and terror tactics is not theoretical; it is already occurring.

The findings presented here demand an integrated policy response that brings together counter-terrorism, online safety regulation, artificial intelligence governance, policing, and community protection. Fragmented approaches are no longer sufficient for a threat environment that is inherently cross-platform, cross-border, and technologically fused.

Iman Atta, OBE
Director, Tell MAMA

Summary

This Tell MAMA research briefing identifies how a notorious and short-lived Telegram channel that encouraged the targeting of mosques offline had taken its aesthetic from a defunct Russian hacktivist Telegram channel that sought to ferment tensions, spread racism, and upload terrorist documents. Whilst their origins remain a mystery, what is clear, however, is the danger of neo-Nazi and far-right extremists abroad hoping to encourage racist violence and disorder in the UK (as observed during the far-right rioting after the tragic Southport murders and stabbings).^{1 2}

Furthermore, we reveal the role of generative AI materials in their original propaganda materials and how they likely used paid X (formerly Twitter) accounts to spam their presence following the Southport stabbings and murders and the subsequent far-right violence and rioting in parts of England, alongside creating other social media accounts to create a false online presence within the UK, whilst seeking simultaneously, to recruit individuals within the UK to target Muslim communities at their places of worship, whilst creating a bivouac of extremist racism that had the potential to cause real-world violence and harm before the channel (and its more extremist secondary channel) became inaccessible.

¹ Thomas, Ed. "BBC Confronts Neo-Nazi Who Gave UK Rioters Arson Tips." BBC News. Last modified October 2, 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cp8l9gpp8yro>.

² Tell MAMA. "How Neo-Nazis and Far-right Agitators Abroad Use Telegram to Target Muslims in the UK." TELL MAMA. Last modified August 8, 2024. <https://tellmamauk.org/how-neo-nazis-and-far-right-agitators-abroad-use-telegram-to-target-muslims-in-the-uk/>.

On January 25, 2025, Sky News reported on an ongoing Metropolitan Police investigation into various acts of anti-Muslim graffiti targeting mosques, community centres, and a primary school.³ The article alluded to the influence of a “Telegram hate group” that offered £100 in any cryptocurrency to those committing acts of vandalism.⁴ HOPE Not Hate⁵ and Katherine Denkinson⁶ identified evidence of an apparent Russian influence on the channel in the weeks ahead, with the Guardian newspaper publishing an article headlined “Russia-linked Telegram channels ‘offering to pay for attacks on UK mosques’” that included quotes from Tell MAMA and others.⁷

We will judge your work together and choose a winner!



⁷ Quinn, Ben. "Russia-linked Telegram Channels 'offering to Pay for Attacks on UK Mosques.'" The Guardian. Last modified February 28, 2025. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2025/feb/28/russia-linked-telegram-channels-offering-to-pay-for-attacks-on-mosques>.

It was during these weeks of investigation into the far-right Telegram channel did Tell MAMA's investigations and research team provided police forces and counter-terrorism police with additional intelligence and reports, identifying domestic threats to some mosques outside of London, alongside the sheer volume of material shared that would likely be useful to or encourage violent terrorism towards Muslim communities in the United Kingdom.

Nor is this the first high-profile example of Russian or foreign influence via social media in hopes of spreading anti-Muslim, anti-migrant and broader racist sentiments in the UK. One of the most high-profile examples arose after the terror attack on Westminster Bridge on March 22, 2017, killing four people and injuring fifty individuals. A far-right account named @SouthLoneStar targeted a Muslim woman in the aftermath, falsely accusing them of "indifference" to the victims of the terror attack, which resulted in vast swathes of anti-Muslim and Islamophobic abuse online. In response, Tell MAMA issued a public statement on her behalf. Furthermore, it emerged that the @SouthLoneStar belonged to the notorious Russian-state-backed "troll army" called the Internet Research Agency⁸ and had live-tweeted other terror attacks⁹ and was a widely shared propagator of falsehoods about the terror attack on a mosque in Quebec in 2017, according to researchers.¹⁰ Tell MAMA's research identified similar tactics, attempting to call for bans on Islam in the Netherlands, amongst other far-right agitations on Twitter.¹¹ For a more general overview of how the Internet Research Agency built its disinformation operations, see Dawson and Innes (2019).¹² More broadly, Innes et al. (2021) analysed the overlap between the shared interests of some European far-right groups and the Russian state.¹³ However, with no firm evidence of any links to any state-backed "click farms", we urge readers to instead focus on the interconnectivity of transnational far-right interactions and networks on social media. For Doerr (2017), despite appealing to their specific political and national contexts, what they had in common was a "systematic strategy" of media provocations that spoke to various audiences in visual or symbolic terms.¹⁴ Moreover, when considering the role of social media within these far-right networks, as Fielitz and Marcks (2019)¹⁵ and Koehler (2014)¹⁶ have established, these digital spaces serve as hubs to host illegal materials and afford members autonomy.

⁸ Freelon, Deen, and Tetyana Lokot. "Russian Twitter Disinformation Campaigns Reach Across the American Political Spectrum." *Misinformation Review*. Last modified July 10, 2023. <https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/russian-disinformation-campaigns-on-twitter/>.

⁹ Burgess, Matt. "Russian Trolls Live-tweeted Manchester and London Attacks." *WIRED*. Last modified November 14, 2017. <https://www.wired.com/story/russian-twitter-troll-westminster-bridge-manchester-southlonestar/>.

¹⁰ Jiwani, Yasmin, and Ahmed Al-Rawi. "Russian Twitter Trolls Stoke Anti-immigrant Lies Ahead of Canadian Election." *The Conversation*. Last modified July 23, 2019. <https://theconversation.com/russian-twitter-trolls-stoke-anti-immigrant-lies-ahead-of-canadian-election-119144>.

¹¹ Tell MAMA (2018). "Beyond the incident: Outcomes for victims of anti-Muslim prejudice Tell MAMA annual report 2017." Available at: <https://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Tell-MAMA-Report-2017.pdf>

¹² Dawson, Andrew, and Martin Innes. "How Russia's internet research agency built its disinformation campaign." *The Political Quarterly* 90, no. 2 (2019): 245-256.

¹³ Innes, Martin, Helen Innes, Colin Roberts, Darren Harmston, and Daniel Grinnell. "The normalisation and domestication of digital disinformation: On the alignment and consequences of far-right and Russian state (dis) information operations and campaigns in Europe." *Journal of Cyber Policy* 6, no. 1 (2021): 31-49.

¹⁴ Doerr, N., 2017. Bridging language barriers, bonding against immigrants: A visual case study of transnational network publics created by far-right activists in Europe. *Discourse & Society*, 28(1), pp.3-23.

¹⁵ Fielitz, Maik, and Holger Marcks. "Digital fascism: Challenges for the open society in times of social media." (2019).

¹⁶ Koehler, Daniel. "The radical online: Individual radicalization processes and the role of the Internet." *Journal for Deradicalization* 1 (2014): 116-134.

The discussions, memes and historiographies incubated within the Telegram channel speak to the idea of a digital far-right culture, reflecting what more broadly satisfies O'Malley et al., (2022) description of subcultures, as far as what connects them across postcodes and geographies aligns towards shared ideologies, characteristics, and behaviours.¹⁷

The extremist behaviours online and offline speak to how the far-right operates in a post-internet, or, as Fielitz and Thurston (2018) argued, a post-digital formulation which, in short, sought to understand how this once disruptive act follows a broader social change – shaped by what they call the “naturalization” of our interconnected lines (between the online and offline) and that “digitality” is not “inextricable” from our daily lives.¹⁸ Specifically, the term sought to draw attention to how the far-right proved so effective at organising both offline and online.¹⁹ Crucially, they argue, to understand that within this resurgence in North America and Europe, involves a clear understanding that intermedia systems are not neutral, but instead, broadly function as spaces for social processes where political opinions emerge, are spoken of and most importantly, practised and mediated – meaning that they can spread more widely, more quickly and circumvent geographies, traditional news media to multiple platforms (encrypted or otherwise) to keep the politics of those involved in “constant contact” with their personal lives.²⁰ Of equal relevance and importance is the diverse array of media ecosystems that Karas (2024) identified as bridging the gap between the online and offline (including livestreams, podcasts, and social media communities).²¹ Moreover, they contend, due to the diversity of ideologies, structures, audiences, and organisational methods, this creates the possibility of “catalysing” networking, protest, and political violence offline.²²

¹⁷ O'Malley, Roberta Liggett, Karen Holt, and Thomas J. Holt. “An exploration of the involuntary celibate (incel) subculture online.” *Journal of interpersonal violence* 37, no. 7-8 (2022): NP4981-NP5008.

¹⁸ Fielitz, Maik, and Nick Thurston. *Post-digital cultures of the far right: Online actions and offline consequences in Europe and the US*. transcript Verlag, 2018.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 11.

²¹ Karas, Tony. “Cultural criminology, counter-extremism and the contemporary far right.” *Crime, Media, Culture* 21, no. 3 (2025): 267-293.

²² *Ibid.*

Direct action

The extreme far-right Telegram channel called Direct Action (hereinafter, DA). It included a far smaller channel for members to discuss tactics, upload materials likely to encourage or prove useful to terrorists and encourage the targeting of individual Muslims and mosques.

Those behind DA likely purchased inactive Twitter accounts from abroad, or, in some cases, used scripted bots to amplify their messaging. Within certain examples, however, they had displayed cyborg behaviour (a type of hybrid social media account used for a variety of reasons that uses automated scripts and human activity, see Ng, Robertson, and Carley, 2024).²³

Twitter –

The DA footprint on X (formerly Twitter) appeared mostly following the Southport murders and stabbings, encouraging violence towards minorities and the police during August and September 2024. A smaller segment of the DA-linked accounts reshared content from the Telegram channel until January 2025.

For example, an account created on May 14, 2024, became active a month after the stabbings and weeks after the worst of the far-right violence occurred, with a post that read, “Starmer administration can’t hear you disagree? Let him see it. Fire + Police car = 2.500£ for you” on August 29.

The calls for anti-police violence included a cash incentive (written as 2.500£, not £2,500). They used multiple relevant hashtags related to Southport and the far-right violence, with the #UnitedKingdom hashtag misspelt as “#UnitedKingdoom.” The account would spam the poster to accounts mentioning the riots or violence, disinformation campaigns and in some cases, active far-right accounts. The DA poster contained a poorly edited photo of a police car (City of London Police), an image of police officers dealing with someone during the horrific far-right violence in Rotherham that targeted a hotel housing refugees (that included attempted arson to endanger life²⁴), juxtaposed alongside a Molotov cocktail and the exterior of a mosque. The DA logo did appear in the poster, but no name appeared beyond the bot account on Telegram linked to the group. A second image, posted the same day, depicted a series of Molotov cocktails against the Union Jack, with a promise of payment (again, a reversed £ symbol) captioned, “Save England! Burn the police.”

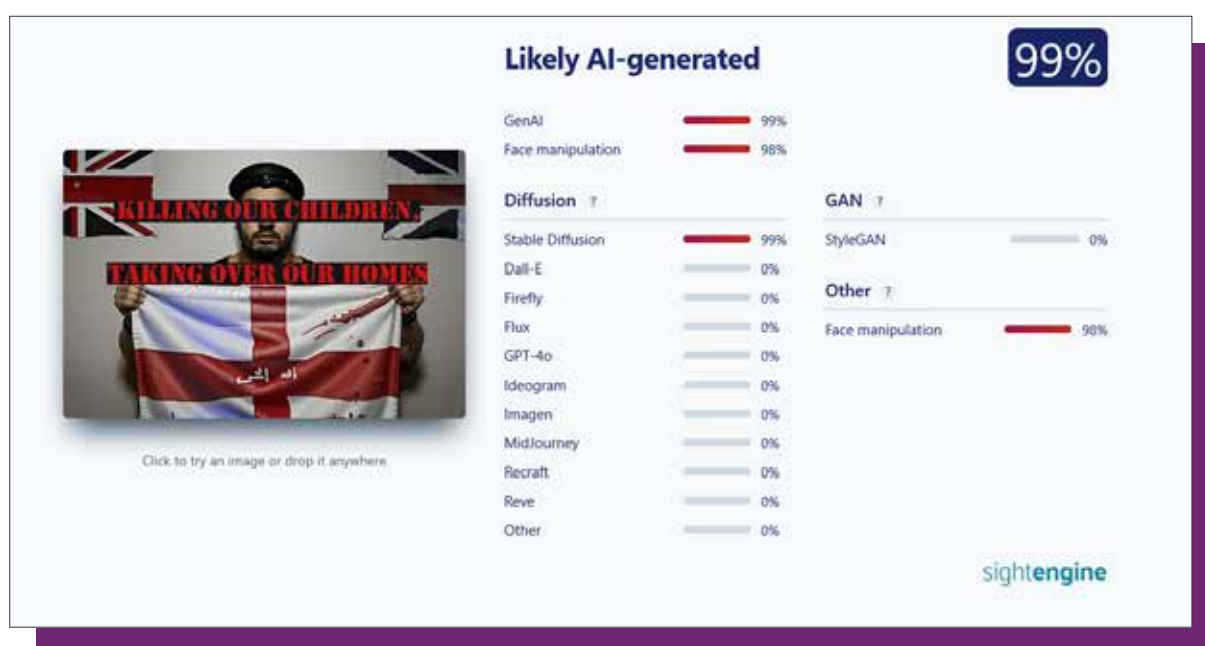
Our research identified further paid-for accounts which had remained dormant on the platform for years before posting their racist, far-right propaganda from September 2024 onwards. Again, the same pattern of language repeats. For example, one post read, “ARE

²³ Ng, Lynnette Hui Xian, Dawn C. Robertson, and Kathleen M. Carley. “Cyborgs for strategic communication on social media.” *Big Data & Society* 11, no. 1 (2024): 20539517241231275

²⁴ Edwards, Christian. “‘They Tried to Kill People’: Rotherham Residents Despair After Riot at Hotel Housing Asylum Seekers.” CNN. Last modified August 7, 2024. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/08/06/uk/rotherham-uk-far-right-riot-protest-intl/index.html>.

YOU READY TO FIGHT FOR ENGLAND??? Fire + Police car = 4.000£ for you.” The post (as did other examples) misspelt another major city, with Glasgow written as “#Glassgow” and attached a video splicing together anti-police violence, Muslim men praying and footage of a brawl in Southend last July (which included some brandishing machetes), and, as of May 2025, ten teenagers entered guilty pleas for violent disorder.²⁵ The interactions came in response to broad anti-fascist content shared before the Southport stabbings, including content dating as far back as 2021.

A third account identified made its first post on September 11, 2024, having existed on X since May 2015. As before, the first post followed the same script, “The government doesn’t notice your dissent? Let them feel it. Realise your protest. Fire + Police car = 4.000£ for you.” Again, the same misspelt hashtag appeared alongside other popular hashtags like Southport. Moreover, the same text and hashtags appeared in their second, but where it deviated was the inclusion of racialised AI imagery linking Muslims to violence and terrorism. To ascertain the likelihood of AI-generated content, we ran the image through the popular detector Sightengine, which returned a 99% score.



Further inspection of the image revealed how it attempted to pass off broken letters as ‘Arabic.’

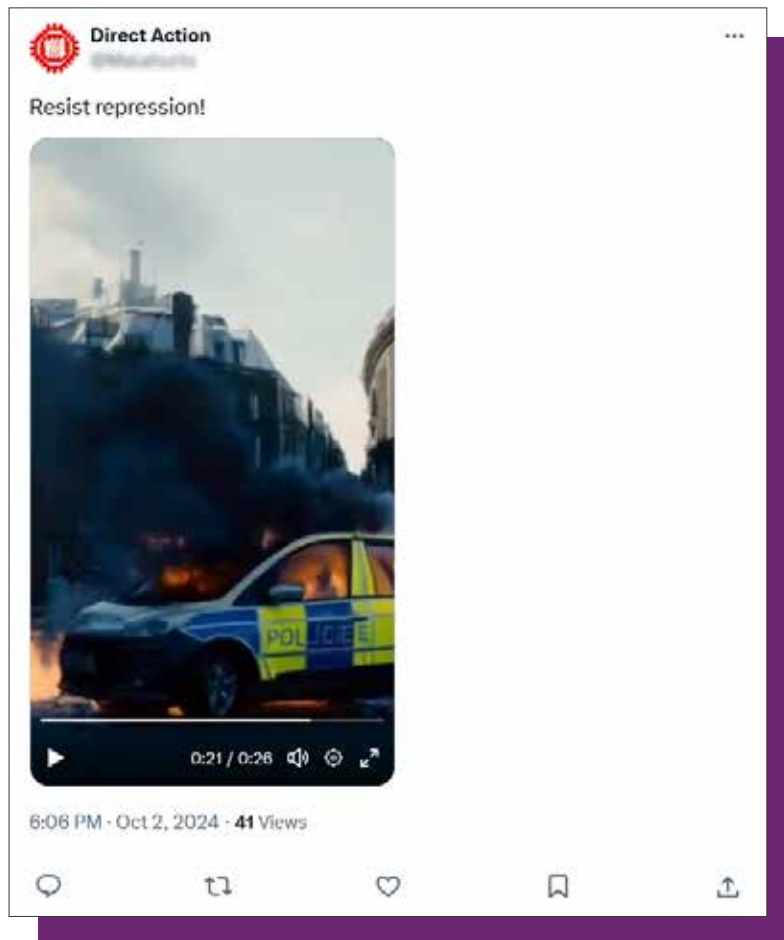
Further posts demonstrated clear examples of AI materials in their propaganda videos. One example of a “burning” police car had misspelt police as “polcie.”

²⁵ ITV News. “Tenth teenager pleads guilty over Southend-on-Sea summer machete fight.” ITV News. Last modified May 1, 2025. <https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2025-05-01/tenth-teenager-pleads-guilty-over-seafront-machete-fight-last-summer>.



A second propaganda video, uploaded to the account on October 2, 2024, used more violent language, calling for “resistance” against “occupation” as “the enemy is close”. Again, we saw AI-generated content involving burning police cars (the vehicle incorrectly spelt police as “policee”) alongside real-world footage, including footage of the old Sunderland police station burning following local riots.²⁶

²⁶ Watling, Tom. “Police Station Torched and Mosques on High Alert After Rioting Spreads to Sunderland.” The Independent. Last modified August 3, 2024. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/uk-riots-sunderland-fire-southport-stabbings-b2590497.html>.



(AI-generated examples of burning police cars)



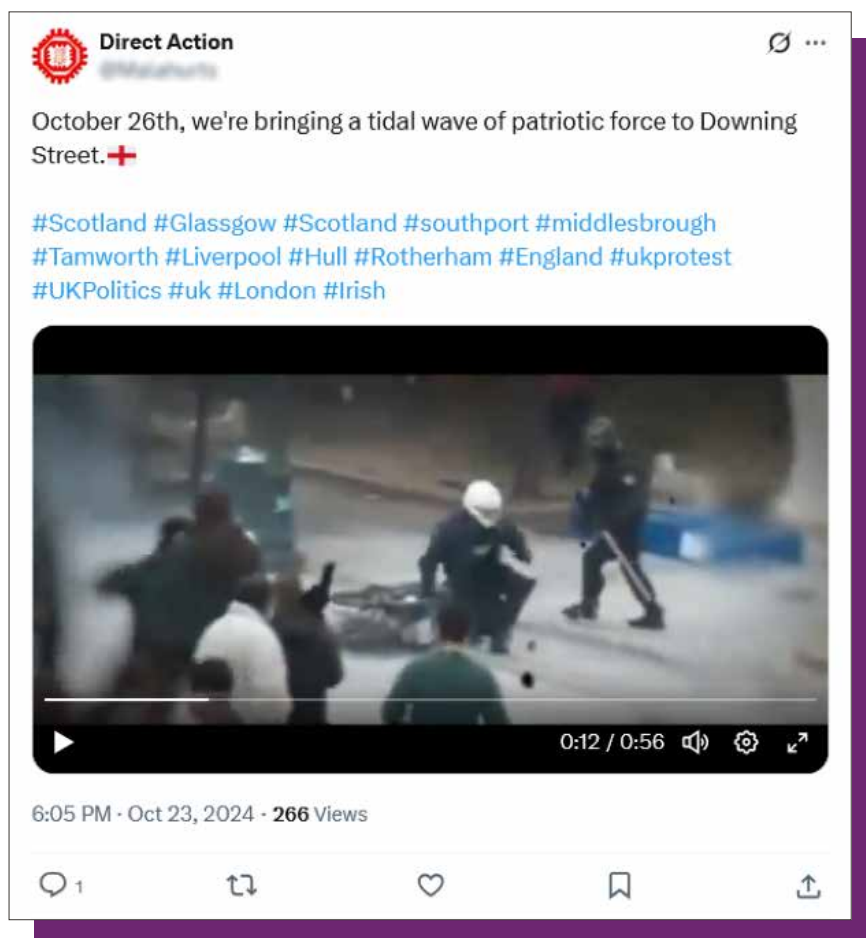
(AI-generated examples of burning police cars)

The Malahurts account became more aggressively anti-Muslim and harmful in their output during the month and early October, including a graphic image of a violently injured (or dead) man with the text “keep England clean” as the account had also retweeted Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson). Moreover, the @Malahurts account is the clearest example we identified as a cyborg account that Gorwa and Guilbeault (2020) identified as an account controlled by human (or multiple human) operators, whilst also reliant upon automated scripts.²⁷ Or, as Chu et al. (2010) established, human-assisted bots or bot-assisted humans.²⁸ In an example of human activity, the account interacted with a notable anti-fascist page and heaped praise on a far-right group, referring to them as “heroes” in October 2024, with the account also calling several individuals jailed for violent disorder during the riots in scripted replies that read, “This is what a hero looks like. A brave man fighting for his future.” Between some anti-ULEZ videos advocating criminal damage, on October 23, 2024, “the account wrote, October 26th, we’re bringing a tidal wave of patriotic force to Downing Street,” which is a sentence directly lifted from two previous tweets from the far-right agitator Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), to promote a march intended on the day of his sentencing for contempt of court resulting in an 18-month prison sentence²⁹ (made on September 10 and September 18, respectively).

²⁷ Gorwa, Robert, and Douglas Guilbeault. “Unpacking the social media bot: A typology to guide research and policy.” *Policy & Internet* 12, no. 2 (2020): 225-248.

²⁸ Chu, Zi, Steven Gianvecchio, Haining Wang, and Sushil Jajodia. “Who is tweeting on Twitter: human, bot, or cyborg?.” In *Proceedings of the 26th annual computer security applications conference*, pp. 21-30. 2010.

²⁹ Brett Wilson LLP. “Why Tommy Robinson is in prison.” Brett Wilson Media and Communications Law Blog. Last modified January 7, 2025. <https://www.brettwilson.co.uk/blog/why-tommy-robinson-is-in-prison/>.



A further analysis of the DA video shared in support of the march revealed the use of footage of violence towards the police from abroad. The 56-second video included the text “Let’s make England clean again” juxtaposed against a police officer hit with what appears to be a Molotov cocktail – the clip, however, emerged from Athens, Greece,³⁰ during the height of protests against austerity³¹ and police brutality in 2011.³² The video, whilst attracting little traction, explicitly encouraged violence, with statements like “Let your feelings out, no limits,” “stop the traitors,” and “change everything, time to take action.” When challenged, another paid-for DA-linked account (mail_aggarwal) showed human levels of engagement, writing in reply: “The anti-government protest in Greece took a leftist turn, but it was essentially popular and patriotic, not anti-racist. If we’re talking about the protests 9 years ago. We have more in common with these protesters than you. Dogs of Starmer’s current political regime...”

³⁰ Πέτρος Χαραλαμπίδης. “TRUE VIDEO!!!! First Riot of 2011 Athens POLICE RUN OVER PEOPLE!!!!” YouTube. February 28, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIsgM6d0YRA>.

³¹ Donadio, Rachel, and Niki Kitsantonis. “Thousands in Greece Protest Austerity Bill.” The New York Times. Last modified October 20, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/20/world/europe/greek-workers-start-two-day-anti-austerity-strike.html>.

³² The Associated Press. “Clashes Break Out In Athens Over Injured Protester.” WBUR. Last modified May 12, 2011. <https://www.wbur.org/news/2011/05/12/clashes-in-athens>.



The above image might also involve AI video generation, as a different clip of the same image retained the watermark of a popular platform for such video generation. In that other video, a watermark appears very briefly by accident, appearing to match that of the Luma Dream Machine.³³



³³ The article on Luma's Dream Machine incorporated a GIF with a watermark present that looks very similar (LUMA written in capitalised grey letters). Morrison, Ryan. "Luma Dream Machine AI Video Generator is Getting a Huge Update — Here's What's in Store." Tom's Guide. Last modified June 17, 2024. <https://www.tomsguide.com/ai/ai-image-video/luma-dream-machine-ai-video-generator-is-getting-a-huge-update-heres-whats-in-store>.

More generally, for Sandotra and Arora (2024), deepfakes constitute a form of ‘synthetic’ media that relies on AI algorithms to edit various media (photos, videos, or audio) to create convincing, but fake content, which risks fermenting misinformation that risks social and political disorder.³⁴


For the Alan Turing Institute, the detection of deepfakes poses an increasing challenge, but there are important ways to identify them – including visual inconsistencies (noise patterns or colour differences), what they describe as “detectable fingerprints” within pixels or videos, and metadata can help identify trolls or bots on social media platforms.³⁵

Where DeepFakes do provide enhanced opportunities for disruption is with the production of content that is either excusable or inflammatory purely on the merits of the media piece itself (rather than on the credibility of the messaging). Even when overtly false and misleading, such materials still function to support conspiratorial narratives.

The video ended with another glaring typo, “Direct Action UK in all social media platforms,” not “on all” social media platforms. Nor would this prove the first pro-Yaxley-Lennon material that appeared across DA’s social media. A second video in support of the October rally appeared as a YouTube short in December 2024. Two subsequent videos included songs calling for the release of Yaxley-Lennon. On YouTube, a video uploaded on December 20, 2024, the video mentioned stopping “Starmer’s betrayal” with a song that included the line “stand up for what is right, we won’t rest until he takes flight. Free Tommy Robinson.” A second version of the “Free Tommy Robinson” video appeared on a different paid-for X account (HatsuMikuo) tagged in Elon Musk, writing “Free Tommy Robinson #London #Glassgow #southport #Scotland #ukprotest.” The YouTube video also misspells Robinson’s surname with a lowercase ‘r,’ not found in the shortened video on X.

³⁴ Sandotra, Neha, and Bhavna Arora. “A comprehensive evaluation of feature-based AI techniques for deepfake detection.” *Neural Computing and Applications* 36, no. 8 (2024): 3859-3887.

³⁵ Swatton, Dr Phil, and Margaux Leblanc. “What are deepfakes and how can we detect them?” The Alan Turing Institute. Last modified June 7, 2024. <https://www.turing.ac.uk/blog/what-are-deepfakes-and-how-can-we-detect-them>.



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. The video content features a man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a dark blue or black t-shirt. He is looking slightly to his right with a serious expression. Overlaid on the bottom half of the video is the text "Tommy robinson is a political prisoner" in a white, sans-serif font. Below the video, the channel name "@Direct_Actions_UK" is displayed next to a red circular profile picture icon. To the right of the channel name is a white "Subscribe" button. Below the channel name, the text "Tommy Robinson is a political prisoner.#london" is visible. On the right side of the video player, there is a vertical stack of interaction buttons: a "Like" button with a thumbs-up icon, a "Dislike" button with a thumbs-down icon, a comment button with a speech bubble icon and a "0" below it, a "Share" button with a right-pointing arrow icon, and a menu button with three vertical dots. At the bottom right of the player is a red gear icon. The entire video player is set against a white background with a purple vertical bar on the right edge.

Tommy robinson is a political prisoner

@Direct_Actions_UK [Subscribe](#)

Tommy Robinson is a political prisoner.#london

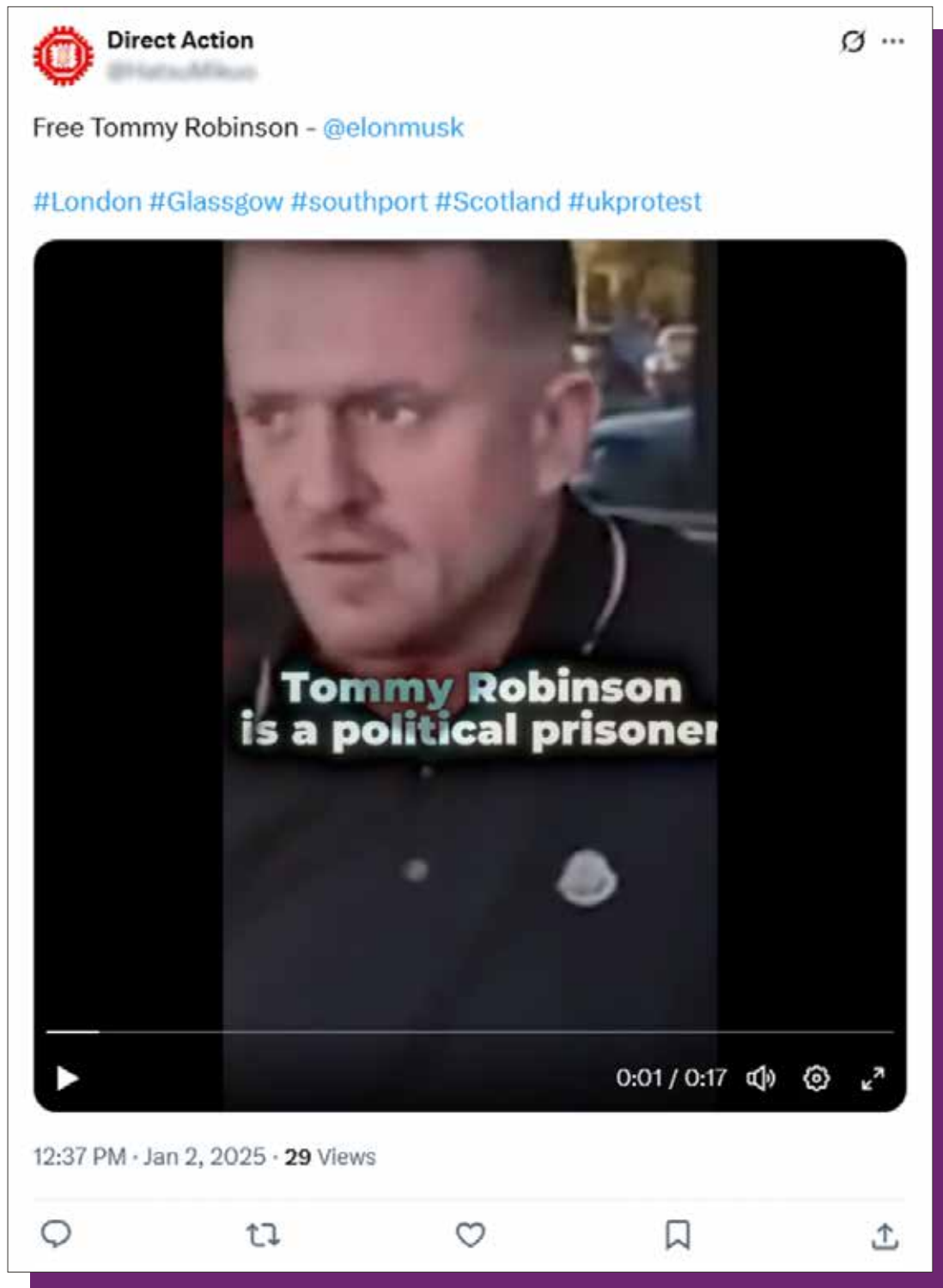
Like

Dislike

0

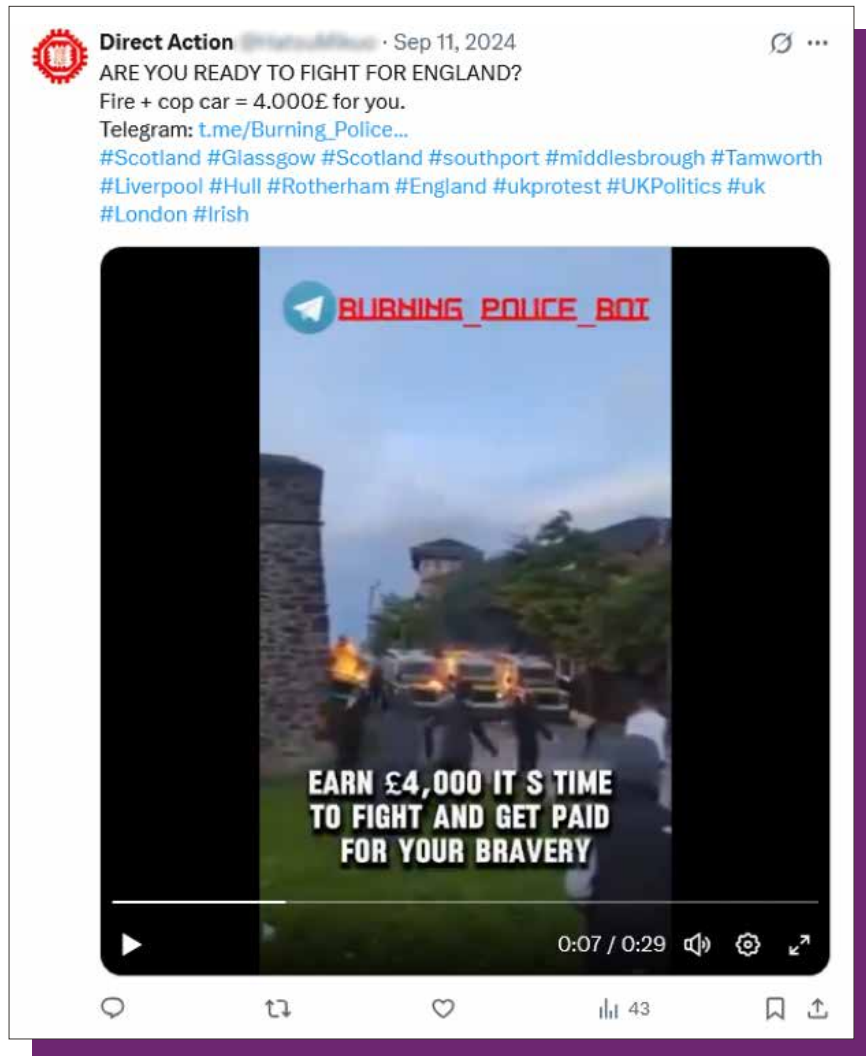
Share

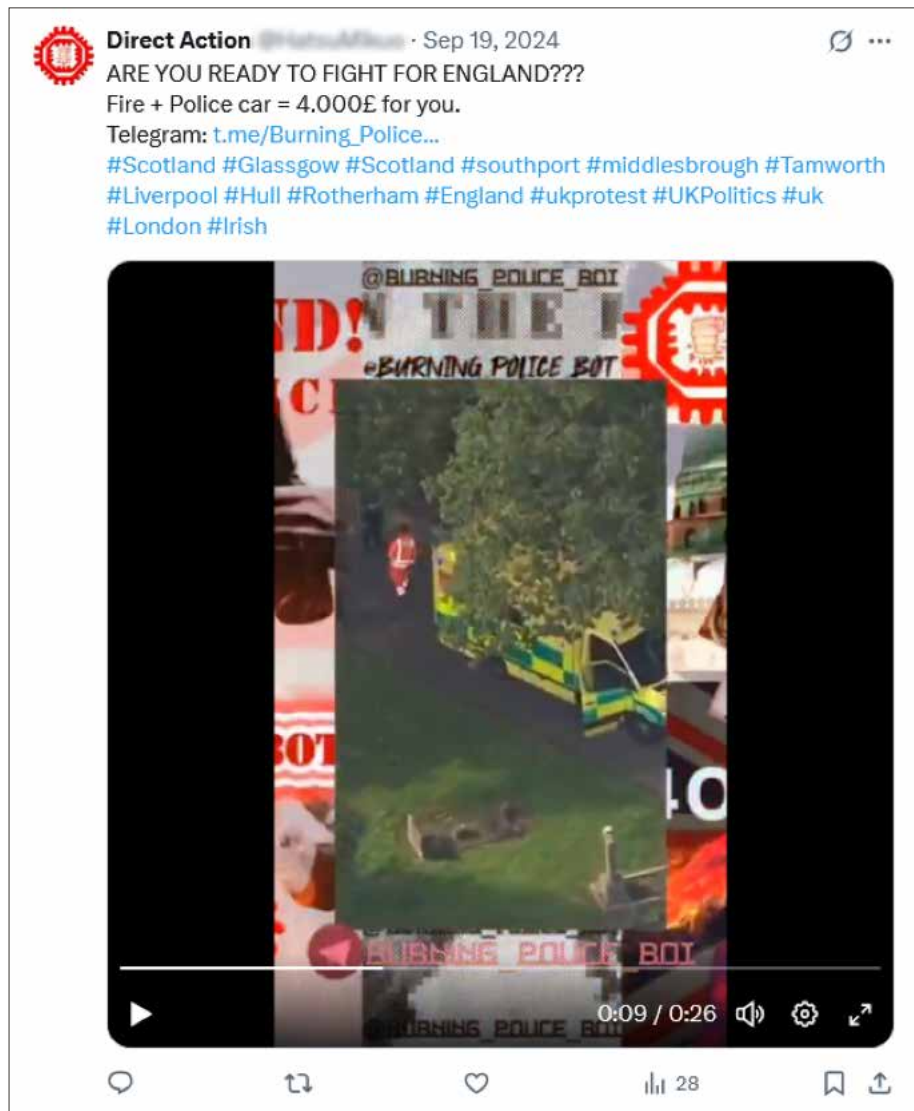
⋮



The HatsuMiko account, whilst not referencing DA (under the Burning Police Bot moniker), uploaded various videos on X during September, encouraging police violence with examples of real-world footage and generative materials. The text for the tweet on September 11, 2024,

read, “ARE YOU READY TO FIGHT FOR ENGLAND? Fire + cop car = 4.000£ for you.” The reversed pound sign appeared alongside Standard American English (cop car), not the British equivalent of a police car (which appeared in their next tweet). More than that, a generative voice (and text) that read, “Burn a police car in England. Earn £4,000. It is time to fight and get paid for your bravery.”





A video shared two days earlier on September⁹ featured the text, “Want? Make money and fight? Write to us! Burn the cops’ cars.”

With nationalist calls to “save England” and footage of Muslims praying juxtaposed to “European Lives Matter” imagery of the Southport victims, the intention of inciting violence towards Muslims and the police is self-evident as the group sought to use Southport as a recruiting tool for the far-right domestically on Telegram, despite its foreign links.

The paid-for account (mail_aggarwal) used racist language, including the N-word, in tweets related to the prime minister, Sir Keir Starmer, that also used generative AI content. In this example, footage of the ISIS terrorist Mohammed Emwazi morphed into a Black male British soldier kissing Starmer. X did limit the visibility of the N-word post, but did not remove it from the platform, as another tweet using a shorthand version of the N-word escaped having its visibility limited.

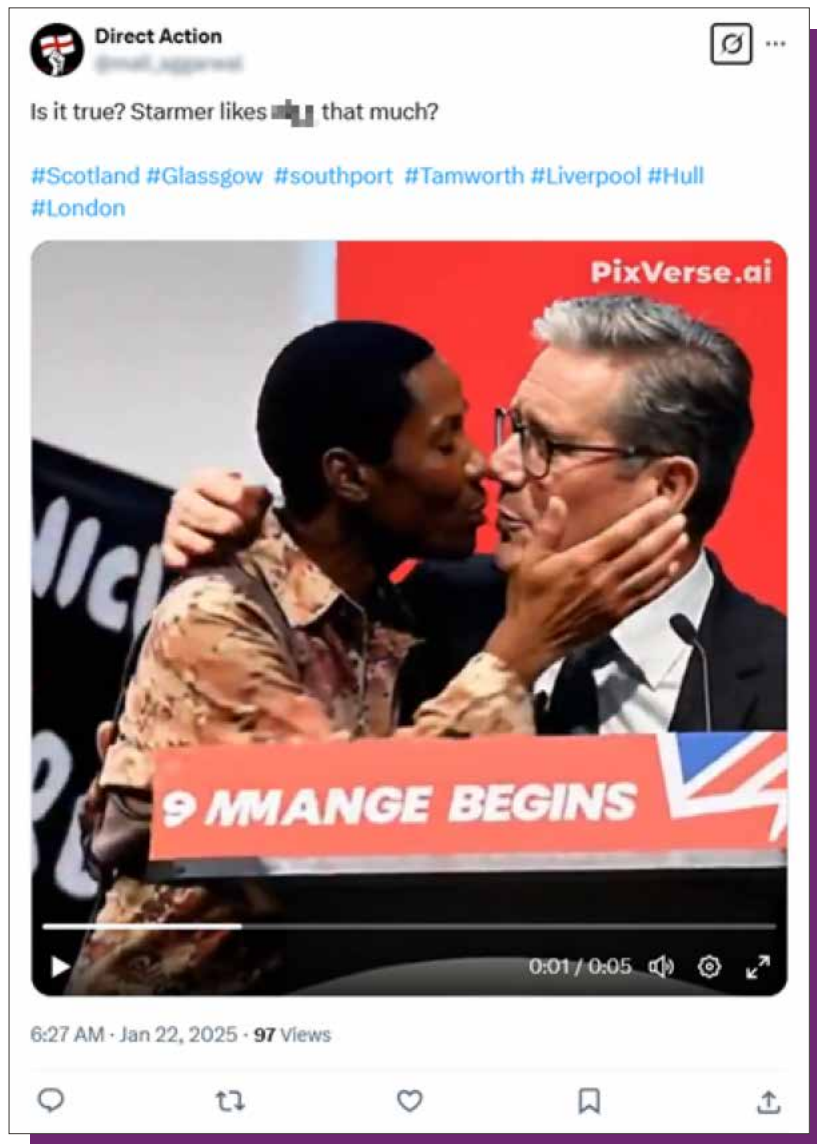
Direct Action
@small_action

Visibility limited: this Post may violate X's rules against Hateful Conduct.
[Learn more](#)

Is it true? Starmer likes niggers that much?

#Scotland #Glasgow #southport #Tamworth #Liverpool #Hull
#London

6:25 AM · Jan 22, 2025 · 61 Views



Other fake accounts appeared on X in August 2024, some of which never posted but used the DA name and logo, including MooreEliza42293. A further account, DorothyMar98844 (zero followers or following any accounts), created in May 2024, sent out eight tweets in total with the same script as mentioned above, including the reversed £ symbol and instead had randomly tagged content related to the riots, but also unrelated content that predated the attacks in Southport. Furthermore, another fake account identified was MargaretHe23333.



Direct Action
@ChristyMar98844

📅 Joined May 2024

0 Following 0 Followers

Not followed by anyone you're following



Direct Action
@Maverick42293

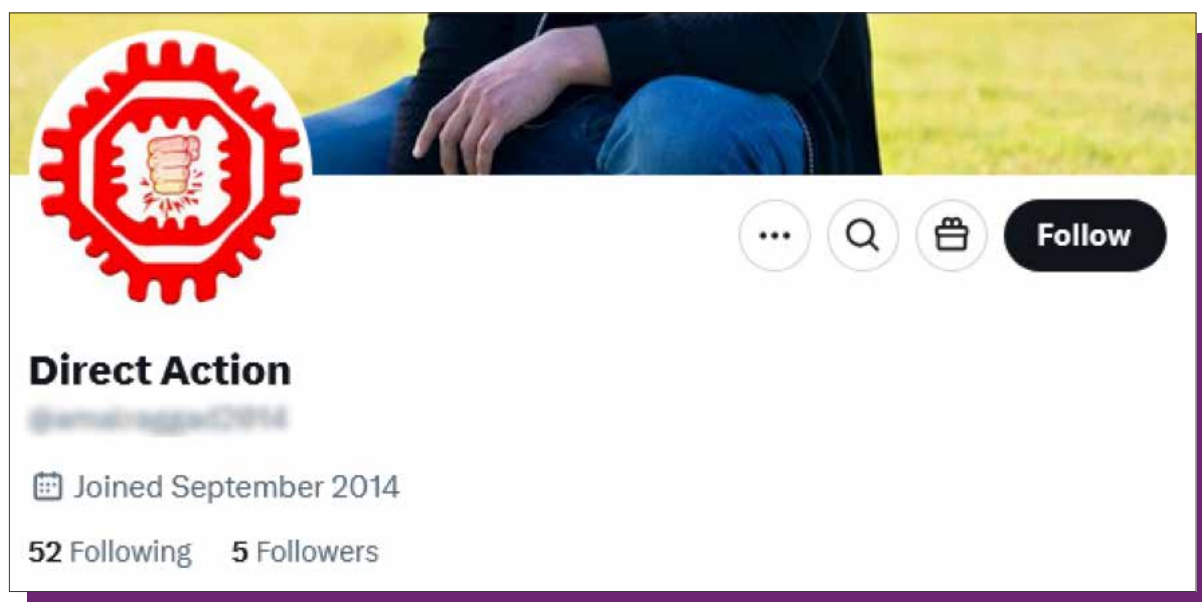
📍 United Kingdom 📅 Joined August 2024

0 Following 0 Followers

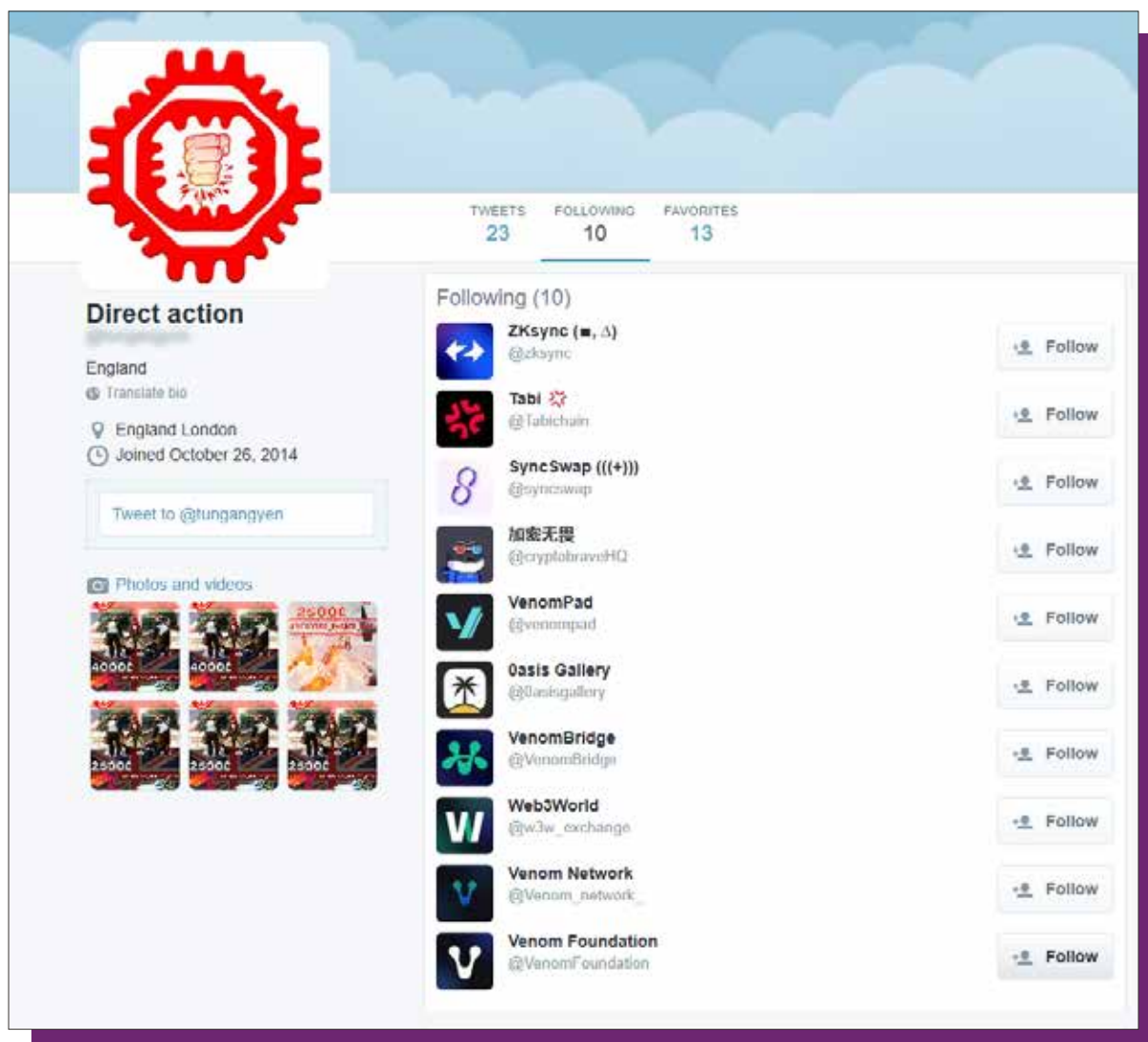
Not followed by anyone you're following



In contrast, on September 1, 2024, a paid-for account, which had previously retweeted unrelated, innocuous material about music or betting, made six DA-related posts in just seven minutes (3:14 pm to 3:21 pm), including tagging anti-fascist content posted in June 2024 and more random content shared in 2023.



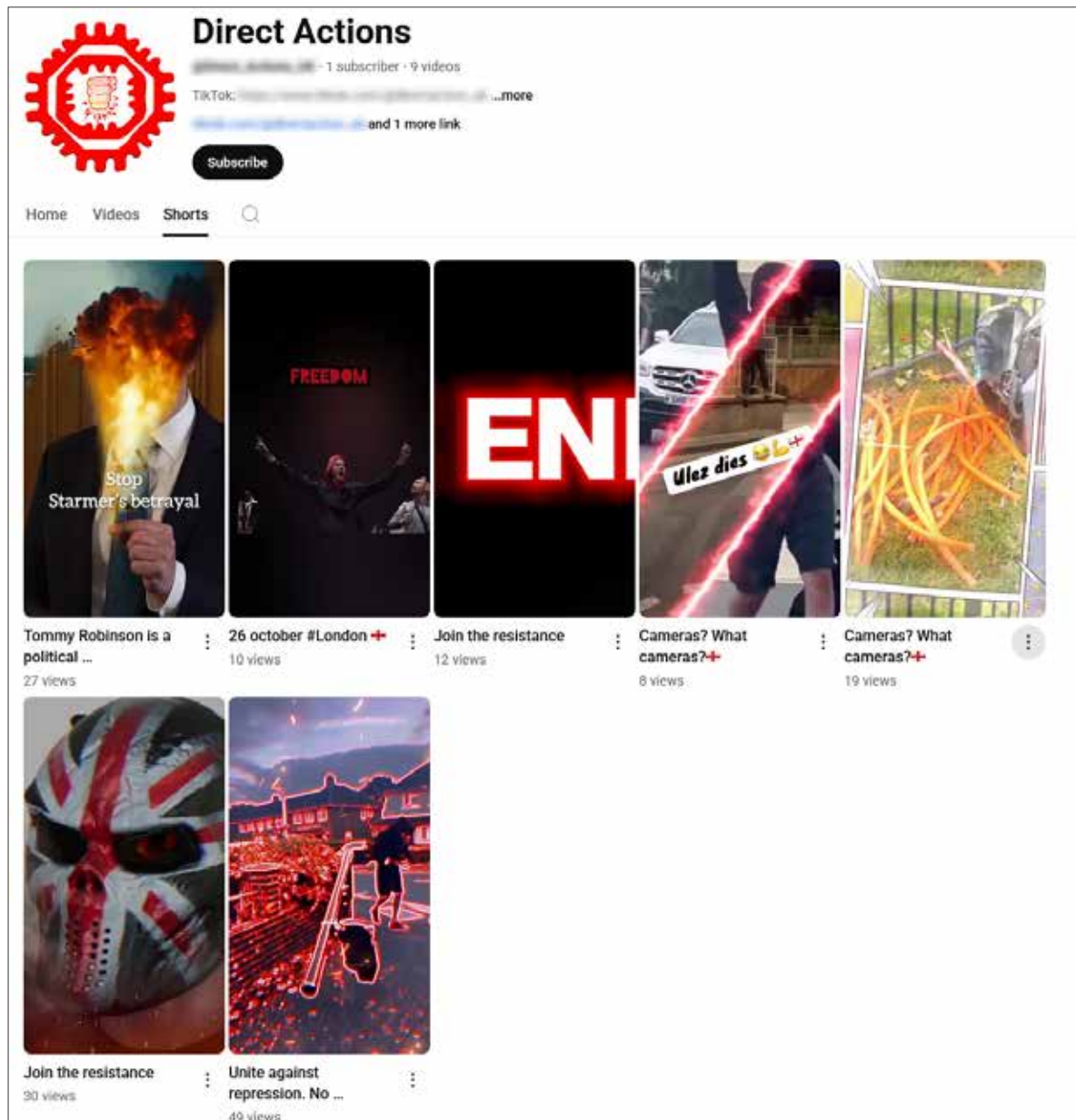
Using a popular free Chrome extension, we could further analyse some of the spam accounts used by those behind DA, with the example below following just crypto-based accounts. However, we also found evidence of potential human use by retweeting from other DA-related accounts. The tweets also contained a slight variation on their overall message: “Instead of solving the problems caused by the failed migration policy, they ordered the arrest of all dissenters. Burn the police, then they will hear your protest! Fire+Police car= 2.500£ for you.” That DA-linked account also retweeted the co-leader of the extremist far-right movement Britain First.



During our analysis of the small cluster of Twitter accounts, we identified one or two cases of dormant accounts purchased and rebranded as DA from India.

YouTube

The individuals responsible for Direct Action uploaded several videos from their other social media channels to the page in October 2024, after the initial channel (whose origins remain a mystery) began in January 2022. In total, across the seven videos, they accrued just 155 views. Upon further inspection, an obvious error occurred in the branding – the YouTube account is listed as “Direct Actions UK (Direct_Actions_UK)”, not Direct Action (Direct_Action_UK), demonstrating again, in the rush to appear credible to a UK-based audience, mistakes occurred.



TikTok

A few DA-related accounts did briefly populate TikTok, which, curiously, did generate some offline activity, with individuals vandalising parts of London and Manchester with their racist posters and calls for police violence, with each image including a QR code or URL text to their TikTok page (DirectAction_UK). Moreover, we found examples of spam accounts on the platform (with one such example spelt Derect Action).

A Google search results for the username (directaction_uk) listed one post misspelt as “Tamworth Protwst.”



TikTok

<https://www.tiktok.com> › Discover

Tamworth Protwst

TikTok video from DirectAction_UK (@directaction_uk): "Make your protest visible. Fire. 241w ago. directaction_uk. DirectAction_UK. Make your protest visible ...



👤 London and Manchester 🗺️

Direct Action 🇬🇧

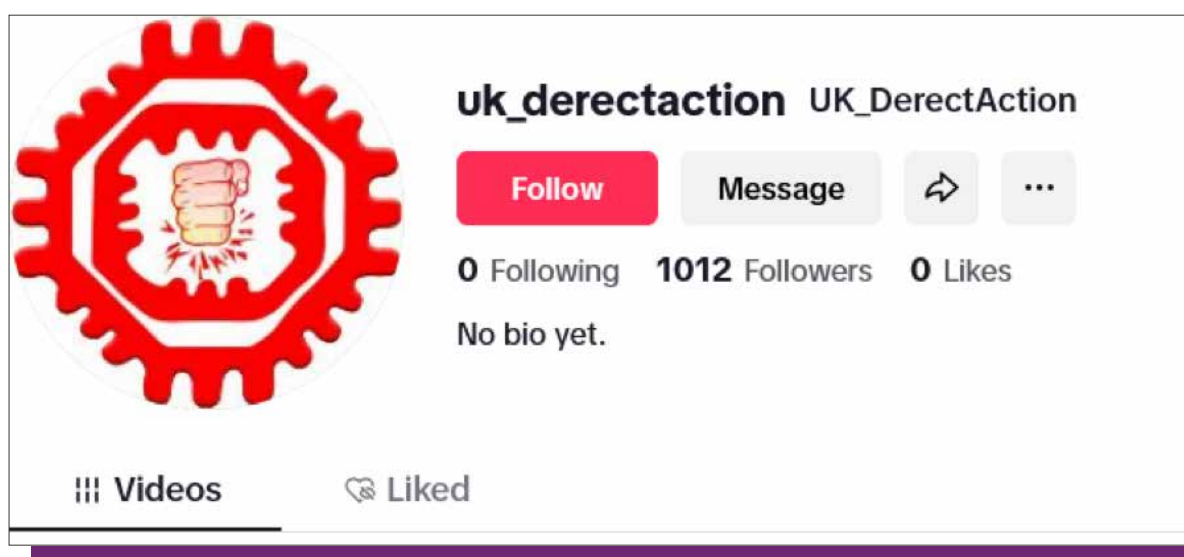


246 👁️ 22:33



Leave a comment





Telegram

On Telegram, one of the earliest known posts from DA appeared on September 3, with an image of the victims of the Southport murders and the far-right slogan “European Lives Matter”, falsely claiming that the murderer, responsible Axel Rudakubana, was “Muslim”. As Tuori and Karjalainen (2025) argued, the far-right uses the language of human rights to invert universality as the rights of minorities become oppressive tools to oppress white Europeans, to which they instrumentalise more broadly to rally against imagined external threats (often Muslims).³⁶

³⁶ Tuori, Kaius, and Iida Karjalainen. “The European far right and human rights language.” *The International Journal of Human Rights* 29, no. 1 (2025): 1-21.

Using software, we downloaded 499 posts from the Telegram channel of DA (before it went private), dated October 16, 2024, and January 30, 2025, and of that figure, 302 referenced migrants, 34 referenced 'Muslim' (n=21 for Muslims), 58 references to Islam and 42 references to migration. Moreover, we identified thirty-eight references to 'mosque' and 'mosques,' 21 references to 'rape' or 'grooming gangs', and fifteen references respectively to far-right conspiracies of so-called 'replacement' and of 'remigration' – the latter appeared in some of the graffiti targeting mosques. Further down that list, we identified twelve references to London Mayor Sadiq Khan, seven uses of the racist P-word epithet, five examples of antisemitism and three we categorised as homophobic and anti-LGBT.

The image below is a further example of AI-generated content used to push Islamophobic tropes about Muslims, linking them to violence and terrorism and appeared in materials teaching supporters how to create Molotov cocktails.

Direct Action UK, clickfarms and social media beginnings

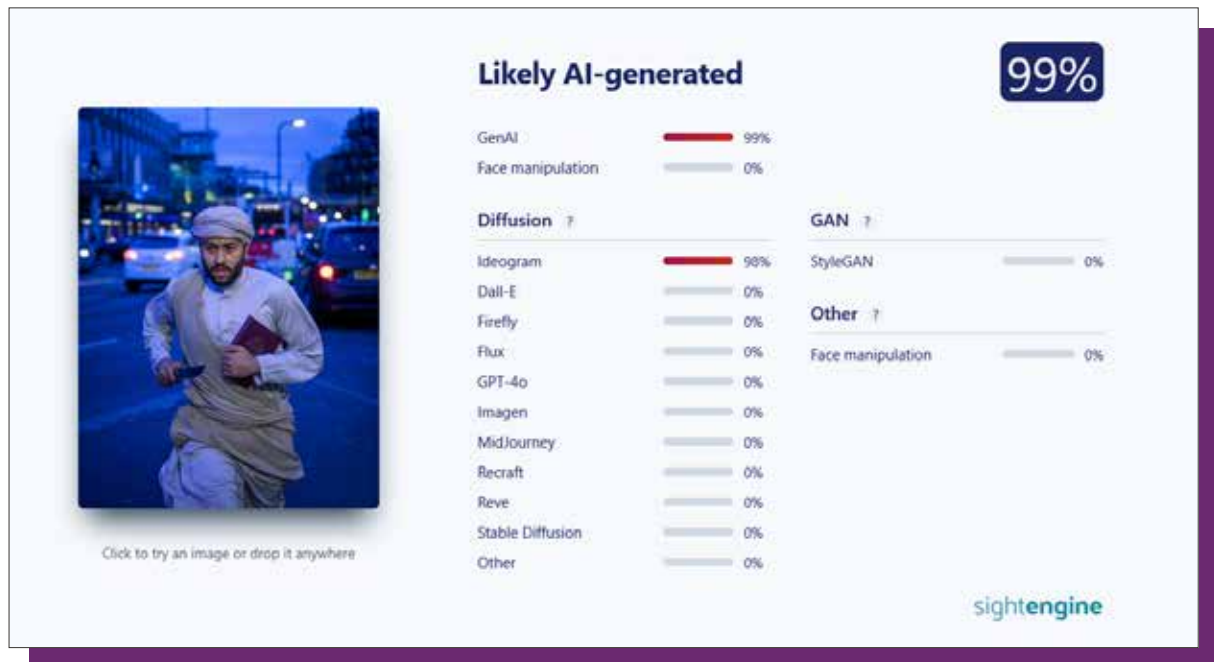
The first page emerged on 3 September 2024, and posts in early October use curious language for a UK-based audience. We listed twenty examples that contained basic grammatical errors, textual inconsistencies (missing commas), and repetitive language (discontent/discontented, dissatisfied, disgruntled) captured between October and November 2024, when the group lacked major traction, receiving around 20-50 views per post.

- 1 **Discontented** with politics and migrants, unite for **our** country!
- 2 **Dissatisfied** with politics and migrants, join us! Together we will put an end to this!
- 3 **Disgruntled** with politics and migrants join us together we will put an end to this!
- 4 If you are against politics and migrants, join us!
- 5 Let's unite together against politics and migrants!
- 6 English police run away from protesters **disgruntled** by politics and migrants.
- 7 Why do we allow politicians to tamper with us on our own soil? We are not happy with politics and migrants! It's time to show it!
- 8 Resist the migrants and the authorities who must be held accountable for their actions!
- 9 **Cancel the invasion and stop the traitors!** Protesters are dissatisfied with politics and migrants and show their **discontent**.
- 10 **Dissatisfied** with politics and migrants join us and we will take back OUR country!
- 11 If only Channel 4 had had the courage to show this interview 4 years ago when I was trying to warn people about the start of the invasion, we wouldn't be in this situation now!
Dissatisfied with politics and migrants join us together we can save **our** country!

- 12 That poor kid doesn't stand a chance 🙄🇬🇧 **Dissatisfied** with politics and migrants join us and we will save our country!
- 13 **Disgruntled** politicians and migrants join us together we will save **OUR** England!
- 14 **Unhappy** with politics and migrants join us and we will not let them mess up **our** country!
- 15 **Dissatisfied** with politics and migrants join us together we will save **OUR** country!
- 16 **Dissatisfied** with politics and migrants join us, together we will save **OUR** England!
- 17 Those who are **dissatisfied** with politics and migrants, join us together we will save **OUR** country!
- 18 **Discontented** with politics and migrants join us together we will save our country!
- 19 It made me **deadly angry**. Total scumbags **Discontent** with politics and migrants, join us together we will save OUR country!
- 20 That was the last straw! **Discontented** with politics and migrants join us together we are saving **our** country!

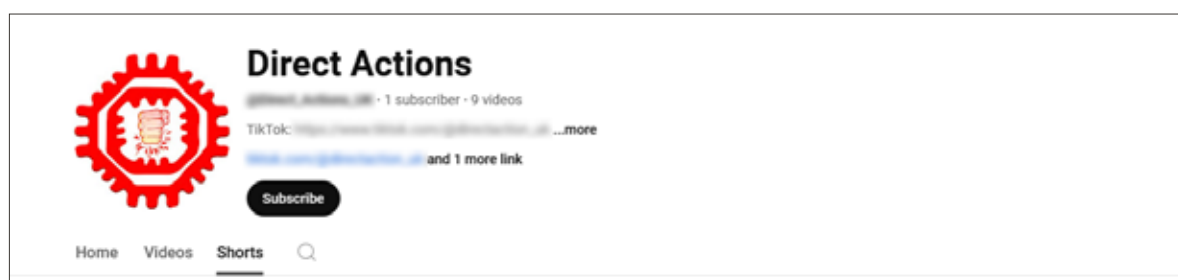
Before the channel went private in early 2025, with 780 subscribers and, even more significantly, was a self-described “militant” channel that boasted eighty-six subscribers. Within this smaller offshoot, several individuals shared dozens of terrorism-related documents, tips on building weapons, and explicit documents for conducting different types of terror attacks. Moreover, within this cohort, we found numerous examples of UK-based individuals posting racist content, encouraging the targeting of mosques and Muslims, and trying to network across major cities like London and Manchester. In one noteworthy example, following the targeted graffiti campaign against various mosques, a Manchester-based member commented about the location of one vandalised mosque in London, wrote: “Lets be real, London, Manchester, everywhere is swarmed with these fucking buildings. Normally surrounded by areas infested with p*kis bringing the local areas downfall.” We observed examples of other UK-based neo-Nazis joining the channel to promote their movements, including violent and racist statements like, “If your not White and British then you shall feel our sting.”

The purpose of the extremist militant group was to coordinate violence and action, discuss far-right ideologies, alongside “instructions and materials for direct action.” Their intention towards violence and the potential for racist terror was self-evident as the channel intended to give advice and tips on “Making flammable mixtures and explosives” to “self-defence” and the “Manufacture of weapons.” Furthermore, the post inviting members into the militant page stated, “The knowledge from this chat will help you survive in this new reality where a black plague has consumed the island,” adding that, “Each of you, can become a new conduit for the cleansing fire. There is no more room for fear when you have a plan of action in your mind.”



The logos

During our investigation into DA, we identified the origins of its primary logo, copied from a now-defunct Russian hacktivist Telegram Channel called “Юность Диверсанта” - The youth of the saboteur (love_and_sabotage1), which had just over two hundred members before going offline.



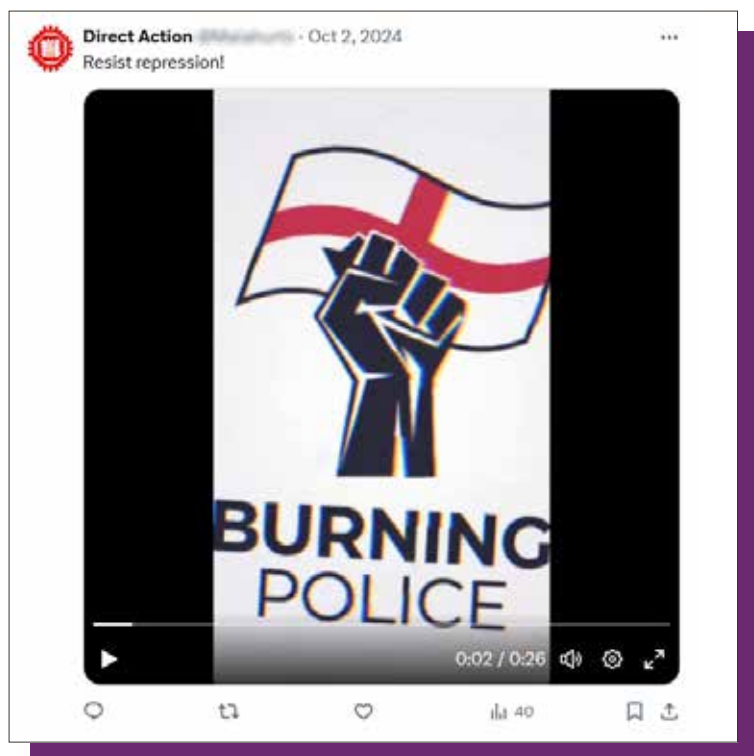
We stress, however, we found no other immediate connection between the above Telegram channel and DA; the identical logo choice remains an important potential clue about its possible origins. Moreover, the channel had promoted or reshared calls to influence the behaviours of others, with translated guides published decades earlier uploaded as PDF files. They also routinely re-shared material from one of the most infamous pro-Russian hacker groups, NoName057(16).³⁷ Similar content appeared from other hacktivist pages on Russian-language Telegram channels, promoting hacking³⁸ from platforms like Cyber Dragon Russia³⁹. Other noteworthy examples included posts (with resources) concerned with influencing human behaviour for recruitment, including the use of social media to identify potential candidates, with additional advice on building trust with the target, while overloading participants with video content and emotionally charged music.

³⁷ Carey, Declan. “Pro-Russia Hackers Claim Greater Manchester Council Cyber Attacks.” BBC News. Last modified October 31, 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c36p063jz7do>.

³⁸ https://telemetr.io/en/channels/2141421880-love_and_sabotage1/quote

³⁹ <https://x.com/DailyDarkWeb/status/1747582036468969953>

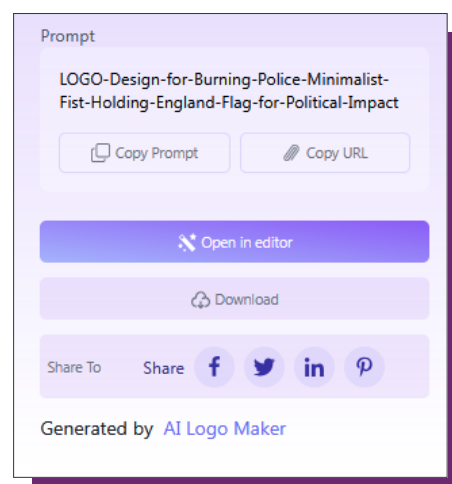
The other main logo, which populated much of their online propaganda, appeared under the moniker of “Burning Police.” We found both versions of the logo under the “activism” tag on Ai Logo Maker.⁴⁰ Moreover, with the right prompt, namely, “LOGO-Design-for-Burning-Police-Minimalist-Fist-Holding-England-Flag-for-Political-Impact,” we re-created a similar design from the same platform.



AI Logo Maker



Logo Prompt



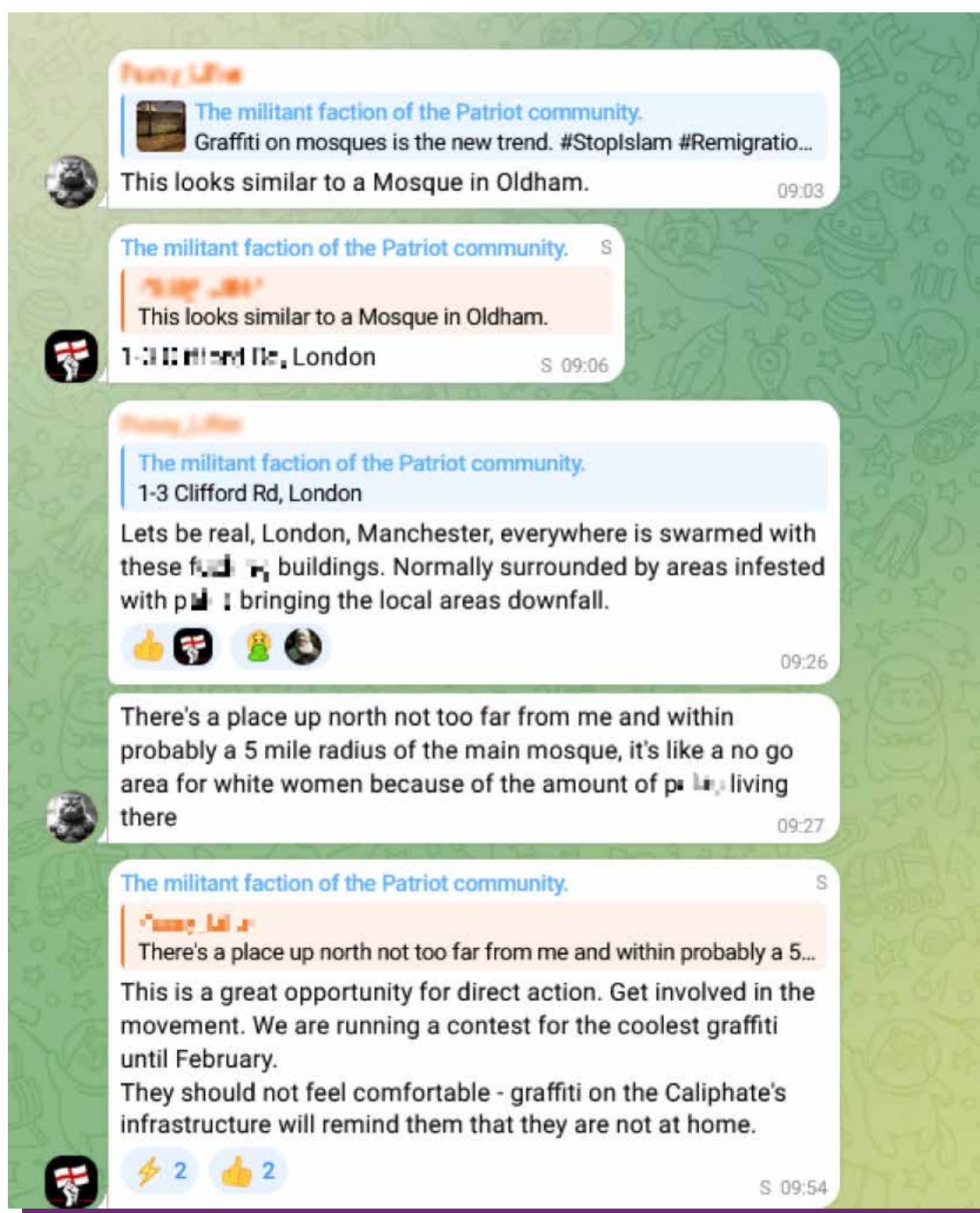
⁴⁰ <https://archive.is/uCA67>

Online/offline criminality, threats of violence and terror

Towards the end of 2024, the DA channels continued the trend of posting materials useful for a terrorist or those seeking to cause violence towards Muslims and migrants, including detailed instructions on building a Molotov cocktail and how to cause maximum damage with it towards vehicles on New Year's Eve.

In January, a spree of anti-Muslim graffiti began in London, with the Metropolitan Police recording several offences between January 6 and Saturday, 25 January. One of the first posts in the militant chat related to the vandalism read, "For the first phase of graffiti, write 'STOP ISLAM' on the mosque. This is a safe action for beginners," adding that it should appear across all mosques in London. Moreover, this came from the group admin in response to a UK-based user who lamented a lack of direct action in such far-right movements, "I've just been in so many grps that end up not going anywhere cause everyones to busy bitching bro." Another user lamented the failures of protests and the jailing of far-right agitators. In hopes of quashing such disquiet and encouraging acts of criminality, the admin replied to the former with evidence of the graffiti on the mosque. Before that post, however, the admin spoke at length about the use of Molotov cocktails and the positives of arson to harm Muslim communities, before adding that they would look to access "Ukrainian manuals" concerning explosives after over members sought to encourage violence and terror.

Crucially, the post did not refer to financial incentives for such Islamophobic criminality, which emerged a day later, in a post specifying the "rules" of their grotesque criminal 'competition.' It offered "100£ in any cryptocurrency" as a reward. In the days ahead, the channel would promote examples of the graffiti from London-based subscribers and those submitting their acts of vandalism to their bot page. When a Manchester-based member (who joined the militant channel on 8 January) asked if he was the 'only patriot' in his area, the admin replied, "Looks like it, bro, here's our graffiti stencil. Manchester needs graffiti too. You've got a chance to take home the prize for the coolest graffiti on Caliphate infrastructure. Mosques and Islamic centres are our targets." Furthermore, the admin again encouraged the user in Manchester to vandalise mosques locally after this member had used dehumanising and racist language about Muslims, writing that his areas were "infested with p*kis bringing the local areas downfall." As the conversation progressed, and this individual mentioned the proximity of mosques locally, the channel admin replied: "This is a great opportunity for direct action," as "Manchester needs graffiti too" as they are "running a contest for the coolest graffiti until February," before ending the message with a threat, "They should not feel comfortable - graffiti on the Caliphate's infrastructure will remind them that they are not at home." Though the background of the channel admin is unclear, they had described sourcing documents in Ukrainian whilst also having uploaded a large plethora of weapon, bomb-making and other terror documents to the channel (whilst lamenting the need to translate it). A pocket of the members in the extremist, militant channel came from Europe, including an individual from Denmark, who, after describing tearing down "commie f*ggot" materials, had the channel admin reply with further acts of mosque vandalism in London.



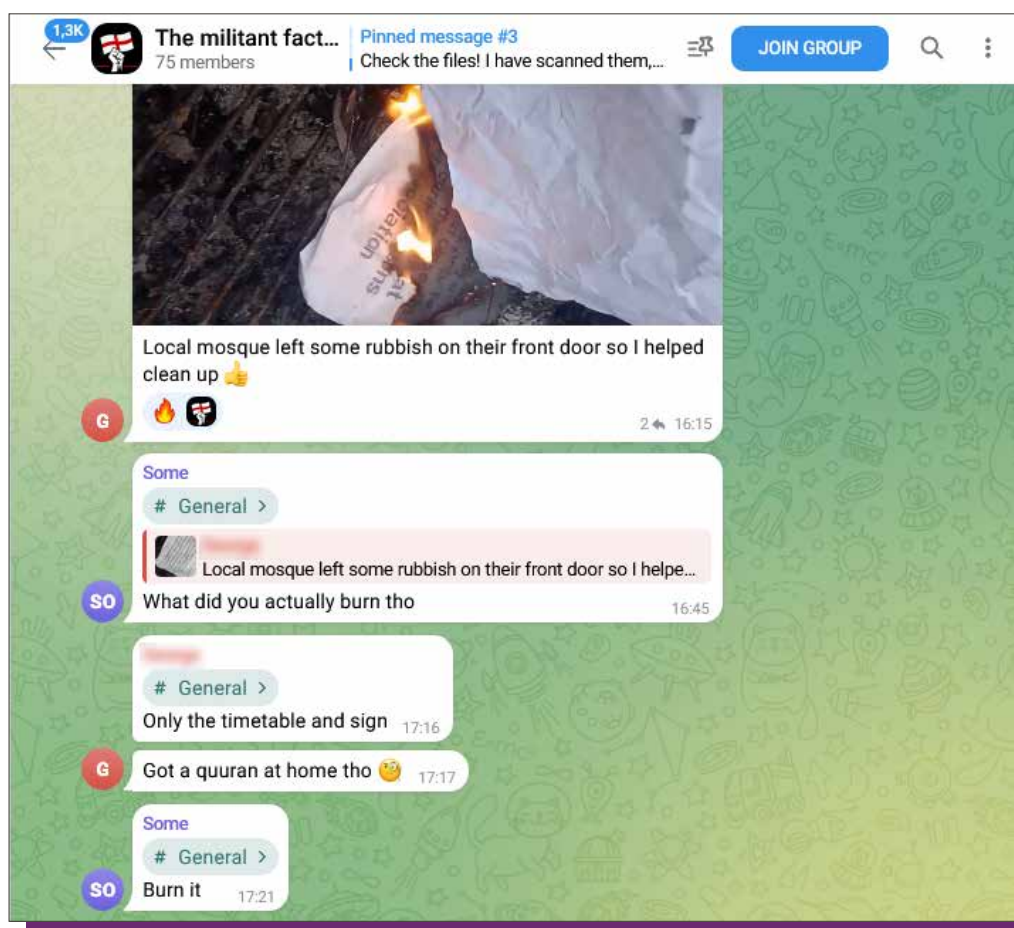
We also saw members from unspecified locations encouraging those within the UK (or abroad) to join the neo-Nazi terror group The Base, which the UK government proscribed in 2021.⁴¹

The group members would congratulate others on their successes after Sky News covered the spate of vandalism, with the page admin boasting that those responsible would not face justice because their 'tips' on graffiti would help them evade arrest. Indeed, detailed advice included counter-surveillance tips, logistical advice and what to wear. The post rallied against a perceived "digital concentration camp" and urged followers to "Stop Islam" with their acts of graffiti as the first step.

⁴¹ De Simone, Daniel. "UK Bans Fifth Neo-Nazi Group Under Terror Laws." BBC News. Last modified July 12, 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57806800>.

Despite the insular and comparatively small size of each channel, it proved rare for its extremist, inflammatory and racist content to venture beyond Telegram, beyond a few minor examples of two or three accounts we identified from Europe, resharing materials on X (some of that came from the few DA-related pages that stayed active during 2024 and into early 2025), we did identify an individual within the UK sharing extremist content from the Telegram channel on Facebook. That individual had shared an AI-generated image that foregrounded a male in a mask and wearing a Union Jack jacket, having set fire to a mosque. Alongside figures that sought to push conspiracies of so-called “Islamisation,” the post asked about “dismantling” them. That UK-based individual we identified shared the post verbatim three days after it appeared in the Telegram chat, and, upon further investigation, this individual has shared for many years racist and far-right materials, including other examples of calling for mass deportations and the destruction of mosques. We, therefore, reported the account holder to Nottinghamshire Police before publication.

On February 11, 2025, a few weeks following the vandalism of various mosques, the more insular, extreme group chat saw other examples of individuals participating in further agitations and criminality. We identified an individual who stole discarded documents from a mosque in the Cheshire area before uploading a clip of him burning them. He wrote: “Local mosque left some rubbish on their front door so I helped clean up.” When another member asked what they burnt, he replied “only a timetable and a sign” before adding that they possessed a copy of the Quran at home, which the same individual told them to “burn.” Before the channel went private, footage of this individual burning a copy of the Quran appeared in the chat, illustrating how members became increasingly extreme through their conversations.



Concluding remarks

The briefing sought to outline how a notoriously short-lived Telegram channel actively encouraged far-right terror, extremism and the targeting of Muslim communities in the UK and whose origins potentially involve those in Russia, though we may never conclusively know. Regardless of its murky origins, we demonstrated how the owners of the account actively encouraged (with financial incentives and direct encouragement) other far-right motivated individuals to vandalise mosques in their cities throughout January 2025. In the months prior, we identified clear patterns of those behind Direct Action purchasing X accounts (formerly Twitter) to cultivate a false idea of credibility, hoping to hijack the grief of Southport to continue pushing racialised, harmful materials towards Muslims and refugees on the platform, including a heavy use of generative AI content, not just in their branding, but to push other racist content alongside broader misogynistic and dehumanising content. On Telegram, the main channel (and more insular extremist page) openly shared materials that would benefit a terrorist, including the creation of weapons and explosives and prohibited texts that explain in detail how to murder civilians with weapons and vehicles. Moreover, it provided details resources for conducting acts of graffiti. Regardless of its origin, we identified various individuals within the UK – from London, Manchester, Southampton, and other cities keen to involve themselves in extreme far-right direct action, demonstrating an appetite to cause harm and violence. We encourage policymakers to do more to address the risks of racists and extremists using AI to spread fear, encourage violence and recruit, alongside proactive steps to improve social media literacy skills in the wake of the horrors of the Southport murders and stabbings, amidst the sheer volume of disinformation and misinformation that fell across social media following that tragedy.

