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Twitter Removed 299,649 Accounts Tied to Terrorism in the First Half of 2017

U.S. and European governments have been pressuring social media companies including Twitter, Facebook Inc, and Alphabet Inc's Google to fight harder against online radicalization, particularly by violent Islamist groups. Twitter said it had removed 299,649 accounts in the first half of this year for the "promotion of terrorism", a 20 percent decline from the previous six months, although it gave no reason for the drop. Three-quarters of those accounts were suspended before posting their first tweet. Britain's interior minister, Amber Rudd, used a visit to Silicon Valley last month to ask Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, and YouTube to step up efforts to remove content that incites militants after four attacks in Britain killed 36 people this year. Less than 1 percent of account suspensions were due to government requests, Twitter said, while 95 percent were thanks to the company's internal efforts to combat radical content with "proprietary tools", up from 74 percent in its last twice-yearly transparency report. Twitter defines "promotion of terrorism" as actively inciting or promoting violence "associated with internationally recognized terrorist organizations." The vast majority of notices from governments concerned "abusive behavior", which includes violent threats, harassment, hateful conduct and impersonation. Twitter said it had removed 935,897 accounts for promotion of terrorism between August 1, 2015 and June 30 this year. The social media platform said in July it had 328 million average monthly active users in the three months to June 30. The European Union has threatened legislation on

Internet firms removing illegal content if they do not step up efforts to police what is available on the web. Twitter said it had received about 3 percent more legal requests and court orders to remove content posted by users in the first half of this year than during the last six months of 2016. About 90 percent of those removal requests came from Turkey, Russia, France and Germany. The transparency report showed Turkey was the most active country in seeking the removal of content, accounting for 45 percent of all requests worldwide.