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**POLITICS**

# TOP RABBI WARNS FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA GIANTS ARE FAILING TO TACKLE DEADLY ANTI-SEMITISM

BY SHANE CROUCHER ON 11/5/19 AT 11:14 AM EST



**S**ocial media giants such as Facebook and Twitter are failing to deal with anti-Semitism and other forms of racist hatred on their platforms, a top rabbi has warned.

Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt of Moscow, Russia, who is president of the Conference of European Rabbis, an orthodox alliance of more than 700 synagogue leaders, said the social networks' failure to address hate speech endangers minority groups, who face greater risks as the far right rises.

Jews face threats primarily from the extreme right and Islamic terrorists, he said.





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Goldschmidt said social media platforms are facilitating the kind of hate that precipitates attacks such as the recent targeting of a synagogue in Halle, Germany, on Yom Kippur and the mosque attack in Christchurch, New Zealand. Both were streamed on social media by the perpetrators.

"Jews are concerned. Jews have appealed to various governments to increase the security of Jewish institutions and to stop and regulate the hate campaigns in social media on the internet," Goldschmidt told *Newsweek*.

When asked if social media companies were doing enough, Goldschmidt said: "The answer is no. They're not doing enough."

He referred to the debate over social media and free expression. Some leaders of the major social media companies are reluctant to strictly regulate the speech on their platforms, arguing that they are neutral parties and that such action is the government's responsibility.

While most platforms have codes of conduct and terms of use, which outlaw hate speech such as incitement to violence and targeted racist abuse, critics accuse them of failing to uphold the rules robustly or consistently and say they are too slow to react to material inciting hatred.

As the debate goes on, young men are still becoming radicalized in online forums such as 8chan and on social media, which is often left unchecked by the platforms' parent companies or the internet service firms maintaining them until it has deadly real-world consequences.

"Today the tools which individuals have through social media are much stronger and much more powerful than the pen and paper your grandparents, my grandparents had a hundred years ago," Goldschmidt told *Newsweek*.

"When unbalanced people full of hate are calling on people to attack a religious or ethnic minority, millions of people see these posts.

"So we live in a different reality, in a different world. And the question is to what extent should freedom of expression be extended if this freedom of expression endangers our society and the





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lives of minorities and minority groups and other people."

The rabbi said the attackers of synagogues and mosques who share footage of their actions are "people who were interested to empower themselves through social media."

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He continued that society must "come to terms with this threat and this danger" from a "small but significant group of criminals and terrorists."

While the internet has brought with it great progress in the rapid exchange of masses of information, a revolution Goldschmidt likened to the invention of the printing press, it has "created a tremendous amount of turbulence and dangers."

"All over the world, including the United States," Goldschmidt told *Newsweek*, "which has destabilized the old world order.

"And in this process of turbulence and destabilization, minority groups especially in many countries feel threatened, and are threatened, by those who try to undermine and to un hinge and to undo what has been built by sweat and by blood since the end of World War II and the end of the Holocaust in 1945."

Goldschmidt called on all of the institutions, secular or religious, "not to underestimate the threat coming from those circles" amid the strengthening of the far right politically, such as in eastern Germany.







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President of the Conference of European Rabbis, Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, addresses a press conference in Berlin on July 12, 2012. Goldschmidt has warned that social media platforms need to do more to take on hate speech.  
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