

Questions from Rep. D’Esposito for Alex Goldenberg, Director of Intelligence, Network Contagion Research Institute.

- 1. Mr. Goldenberg, could you explain how organizations, such as Breakthrough News and The People’s Forum, by hosting or amplifying content that glorifies acts of terror, might face scrutiny under the material support statute?**
- 2. In your view, should organizations that promote extremist content, even if they are not directly involved in violence, be subject to scrutiny for potentially aiding foreign terrorist organizations?**
- 3. Without delving into legal specifics, could you broadly discuss the potential consequences for organizations that facilitate the promotion of extremist ideologies or narratives, given the legal precedents around material support?**

Congressman D’Esposito, to answer all three questions,

As we’ve seen in the case of Tarek Mehanna, a U.S. citizen convicted of providing material support to al-Qaeda by translating and distributing jihadi propaganda, the act of promoting terrorist content—even indirectly—can have significant legal consequences. Mehanna’s conviction stemmed from his role in translating and disseminating videos and articles aimed at recruiting fighters for terrorist groups.<sup>1</sup>

This is directly relevant to the actions of platforms like Breakthrough News and the People’s Forum, which have hosted interviews with members of terrorist organizations and have glorified acts of terror. For example, a host on Breakthrough News recently celebrated the October 7th attacks as a "prison break."

Breakthrough continuously hosts members of the PFLP on their platforms and has hosted Hezbollah leadership in the past. Some of these events were even monetized on YouTube, showing a direct fiscal benefit to BT. People’s Forum, hosted the People’s Conference held in a hall named after a PFLP terrorist, Walid Daqqah, and hosted a speaker that is a member of the PFLP on a livestream.

The material support statute is clear in criminalizing the provision of material support or resources to designated foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs), which includes both tangible and intangible resources. This applies not just to combat-related activities but to non-combat roles as well, such as amplifying terrorist propaganda. The statute encompasses any form of service or expertise that furthers the goals of terrorist organizations.

Given this framework, it begs the question: does hosting and amplifying terrorist propaganda—whether through live streams, events where terrorists are met with standing

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<sup>1</sup><https://archives.fbi.gov/archives/boston/press-releases/2012/tarek-mehanna-sentenced-in-boston-to-17-years-in-prison-on-terrorism-related-charges>

ovations, or YouTube channels—constitute material support for terrorism? Based on the legal precedent set by cases like *Mehanna's*, the answer could very well be yes.

Breakthrough News and the People's Forum could, and indeed should, face increased scrutiny for their roles in hosting interviews with terrorist leaders, glorifying terrorist attacks, and facilitating communication that furthers the agenda of foreign terrorist organizations. These actions mirror the kind of conduct that has led to material support convictions in the past, and it is critical that we do not allow these activities to go unchecked under the guise of free speech or journalism.