

ONLINE ACTIVITIES TO COUNTER VIOLENT EXTREMISM:
TALKING POINTS

- The U.S. Government encourages independent, local efforts to prevent violent extremists and their supporters from inspiring, radicalizing, financing, or recruiting individuals or groups in the United States to commit acts of violence.
- That includes encouraging the countering of violent extremist propaganda through online and in-person dialogue.
- With respect to confronting violent extremism online, in particular, some members of the public have asked for guidance, especially on the application of statutes criminalizing the provision of material support or resources to terrorists.
- This guidance should make clear: the material support statutes **do not prohibit legitimate independent efforts to counter violent extremism.**
- In fact, despite having charged individuals with violations of the material support statutes in more than a hundred cases over the past decade, the Department of Justice **has never prosecuted an individual or group for a legitimate effort to persuade others not to engage in violence.**
- Further, parameters set forth in the U.S. Constitution, federal statutes, and agency policies help ensure that individuals who communicate with suspected extremists or terrorists online in an effort to persuade them not to engage in violence, or to prevent others from being recruited to their cause, will not become the subject of a criminal or terrorism investigation, absent independent indicia of unlawful activity.
- This guidance should underscore the Government's continuing commitment to encouraging independent efforts to challenge violent extremist narratives.
- And the guidance should also show that the Government **would not want to take steps to discourage those efforts**, which can be vital to protecting individuals—especially vulnerable youth—in this country from those promoting violent extremism.
- Thus, we hope that this guidance will extend our continuing efforts to encourage credible community voices to speak out against violent extremism.