Levi George

09/02/2020

CS 30600: Computers in Society

Professor Chansavang

Freedom of Speech and GIFCT

In October of 2019 a synagogue in Germany was assaulted by a lone attacker. The attacker also saw fit to stream the murder from Twitch (A popular livestreaming platform), where the video remained active for at least an hour before the moderators removed it. Normally such a video would spread rapidly across the internet through all means, however the major Social Media giants; Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube had stopped the video’s circulation on there own platforms. This was possible thanks to Twitch’s quick action in uploading the related hashes to a database called the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT). This database is used by media giants to moderate violent content on their combined platforms (Hadavas).

This obviously has some serious implications for free speech. Using this platform for curbing violent post on the internet seems just. However, this could turn into something more maleficent. Since this database helps monitor content on the previously mentioned media giants, it could unintentionally remove content that is not malicious but journalistic in nature. This could range from videos of human rights violations to video reporting on terrorism. What’s worse is this could potentially turn into a weapon against free speech in the future. Also GIFCT and the decisions to remove content are based entirely on the representatives from the media giants that formed the database, meaning we must trust them in making the right decision (Hadavas).

This database and the potential for good and evil bring into question how we best use this tool for good and how to avoid letting it be used as a tool against privacy and free speech.

Referenced Work

Hadavas, Chloe. “The Future of Free Speech Online May Depend on This Database.” *Slate*. 12 Aug 2020. [www.slate.com/technology/2020/08/gifct-content-moderation-free-speech-online.html](http://www.slate.com/technology/2020/08/gifct-content-moderation-free-speech-online.html). Accessed 8 Sep 2020.