

## Open Letter: The Ethereum Community Calls for End to Threats and “Toxic” Behavior

By Staff

02.20.2019



**O**ver the past few days, a conflict between an Ethereum developer and elements within the wider community resulted in that developer, Afri Schoedon, stepping down from his role within Ethereum. BREAKERMAG has been invited to publish the following letter written collaboratively and signed by dozens of Ethereum contributors worldwide. The letter is also being distributed via social media. For those seeking more context, we have [summarized the complex situation](#) that elicited the letter.

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“This statement is a collaborative effort for people working in the space to voice their concerns on integrity. Both contributors and community need to work toward healthier discussion practices and protect each other from threats and violence.

Entities around open source decentralized projects, hackerspaces, and associations are born every day to promote development and to grow awareness by educating people about the value of software that is transparent, protective of freedom and aids peer-to-peer coordination. In order to succeed, these communities depend upon the invaluable work of their contributors, wider enthusiasts and stakeholders.

Unfortunately, time and time again we have witnessed ecosystem members engage in toxic behavior that discourages open discussion such as doxxing, violent threats, or brigading against people they disagree with. In an instance just last week, one of our longest standing contributors, and the catalyzer of the Görli Testnet, [Afri](#), received a wave of verbal violence from some Redditors, forced into the center of a storm on r/ethtrader which, triggered by a couple of tweets issued by him, turned menacing, dark, and deeply toxic. Under stress from this backlash and to protect himself and his family from threats coming from unknown internet users, he made the decision to leave his position as a core Ethereum developer.

While we acknowledge that the intention of Afri’s tweets was to be provocative, these were opinions made in a personal capacity. And while complaints were valid and many of those were made respectfully, others within the wider Ethereum community resorted to impugning Afri’s reputation by asserting his involvement in wild conspiracies, demanding his immediate resignation, and most disturbing of all, issuing personal threats.

It is hugely upsetting and chills free speech when any contributor, whether a developer, community builder or otherwise, is [attacked, intimidated, and is deliberately made to feel unsafe](#).

This is far from the first time similar acts have been perpetrated. To give a few examples, Lane Rettig’s thoughtful post on increasing diversity in the space [sparked unnecessary ad hominem comments](#). Taylor Monahan, who has been an utterly invaluable contributor to the space, tirelessly spearheading initiatives to raising awareness about security and usability, was also

targeted following the birth of [MyCrypto](#) and then again, for expressing positive remarks about non-Ethereum [technologies](#).

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Of course, Ethereum is not the only online crypto community being damaged by such behavior. [Jameson Lopp's very real world ordeal](#) caused by an anonymous person deliberately misidentifying Jameson as an active shooter thereby drawing armed police to his home is yet another awful example of the intimidation that can be wrought in the midst of very heated debates. [As Jameson wrote](#), "had a few variables been different that day, I could easily be dead."

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*"We, the undersigned, contributors and workers behind scores of projects, and those seeking to build better systems, feel that these actions have gone far beyond acceptable standards of debate: Whatever the circumstance, threats against a person's well-being can never be justified and we categorically reject such toxicity in digital communities."*

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We reiterate that the community aims to welcome constructive feedback on all decisions as best we can, given the global, digital environment of our project. Many ecosystem members have voiced valid concerns regarding influential players' perceived or potential conflicts of interest, a more formalized recognition of how backlash can form when someone speaks provocatively in a widely used social media platform, and information for strong contributors who might be vulnerable to burnout. We also believe these concerns are valid, though designing a solution that the community can rally around will take time and lots of input. We call on the Fellowship of Ethereum Magicians to continue discussing these (and other) valid concerns in their forums and at the Paris meeting in March. Nonetheless, we cannot tolerate destructive behavior even if there are areas we can improve as a community.

We, the undersigned, contributors and workers behind scores of projects, and those seeking to build better systems, feel that these actions have gone far beyond acceptable standards of debate: Whatever the circumstance, threats against a person's well-being can never be justified and we categorically reject such toxicity in digital communities.

We also believe the Ethereum community values freedom, free speech, and privacy, but above all, it values basic respect for all human beings and seeks to promote and build systems which in turn promote and incentivize those very values.

It should also be said that the Ethereum network is built, maintained and scaled by *humans*. Though we are a global community, no single individual can be expected to be on call 24/7. Although many contributors represent projects funded by a vast array of people around the world, those contributors are entitled to express personal opinions through any medium they choose.

We must preserve the mental and emotional health of those humans—especially as they labor through their nights, weekends, often without pay, in order to manifest the mission and vision of Ethereum. So we support Afri in this respect and will stand by and protect any others that are being intimidated, at any given time.

Finally, Ethereum governance as a whole is a very pressing issue, which we as a community have yet to resolve. Those issues include how to hold the decisions and actions of core devs/contributors to wider scrutiny, and also ensuring that our community's current power structures don't sideline stakeholders with legitimate concerns.

Ethereum is far from perfect. Like any other chain, we are experimenting with technologies never seen before. Navigating the frontier of discovery throws up the greatest turbulence. So as we build stronger systems for all of us to benefit, let's also work together to ensure that we build better protocols for expressing community concerns and governing ourselves. To this end, please [join the conversation this March in Paris.](#)"

– Adam Kolar (Solidified)

Adrian Manning (Sigma Prime – Lighthouse eth 2.0)

Aidan Hyman (ChainSafe Systems- Lodestar eth 2.0 )

Alex Boerger (ETHBerlin – DoD)

Alex Van de Sande (Ethereum Foundation)

Andreas Wallendahl (ConsenSys, kauri)

Andrew (@cyber\_hokie, AO.capital, EthHub Contributor)

Anthony Lusardi (ETC Cooperative)

Arjun Bhuptani (Connex)

Arlyn Culwick (the Blocknet)

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Auryn Macmillan (Colony)

Ben Edgington (PegaSys)

Billy Rennekamp (Clovers.network, Cosmos, Gnosis, ENSNifty, Memelordz)

Boris Mann

Bryant Eisenbach (fubuloubu)

Caspar Schwa (DoD – ETHBerlin – brainbot)

Chelsea Palmer (Carpe Lunam Events)

Chris Fenos (ChainSafe Systems- Lodestar eth 2.0)

Chris Hutchinson (Status)

Coogan Brennan (ConsenSys Academy)

Corey Petty (Status, Hashing It Out, The Bitcoin Podcast Network)

Daud Zulfacar (license.rocks – Berlin Blockchain Week)

Dave Appleton (HelloGold, Akomba Labs)

David Ansermino (ChainSafe)

Dean Eigenmann (ENS & ZK Labs)

Devon Krantz (Linum Labs)

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Igor Mandrigin (Status)  
Jacek Sieka (Status)  
Jack Gane (Authio)  
James Beck (ConsenSys)  
James Hancock (a Nobody in Berlin)  
James Moreau (@jrmoreau)  
James Quinn (Independent Ethereum Developer)  
Jamie Pitts (Eth. Foundation, Eth. Magicians, Eth. Financial Tools)  
Jason Civalieri (UNH Law Adjunct Professor)  
Jérôme de Tychey (Asseth – ConsenSys)  
John Light (Aragon One)  
Josef Jelacic (Ethereum Foundation, Institute of Cryptoanarchy)  
Joshua Mir (Parity Tech)  
Josh Stark (L4, ETHGlobal)  
Kirill Pimenov (Parity Tech)  
Kris Jones (Canada – just a social researcher that wants to see blockchain  
succeed and maintain healthy feedback mechanisms)  
Laura Giron (ConsenSys Design @lauragirons)  
Leo Arias (Zeppelin)  
Levi Morris (Lambdeth)  
ligi (EF – WalleTH – DoD)  
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# Vitalik Buterin Discloses Non-Ethereum Holdings

**By Jessica Klein**

02.21.2019



**V**italik Buterin, archangel of Ethereum, has disclosed his non-ether/Ethereum ecosystem crypto holdings.

Buterin made the announcement three days ago in a [Reddit AMA](#) about “Ethereum leadership and accountability.” Outside of Ethereum, Buterin holds bitcoin, Bitcoin Cash, Dogecoin, and Zcash, totaling less than 10 percent of the value he holds in ETH. In the Ethereum ecosystem, Buterin owns non-ETH tokens including Kyber Network (KNC), Maker (MKR), OmiseGO (OMG), and Augur (REP), also representing less than 10 percent of his total ether.

Buterin also disclosed his “significant corporate shareholdings.” He’s invested in both Clearmatics, a blockchain research and development company, and Starkware, which focuses on blockchain scalability and privacy. He also mentioned “friends in the ecosystem” working on various projects, like EthGlobal and Plasma Group.

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His disclosures come in the wake of a dramatic week for the Ethereum community. Yesterday, BREAKERMAG published an [open letter](#) from multiple members hoping to quash the recent onslaught of “toxic behavior” in the community, particularly targeting a longtime Ethereum developer named Afri Schoedon. It started with a tweet. Schoedon sent one out in the past week comparing Polkadot to Serenity—the first being a non-Ethereum blockchain project, the second a name for what is otherwise known as “Ethereum 2.0” (for a [very thorough explanation of all this](#), David Z. Morris has you covered).

**Related: [Vitalik Buterin On the Hard Lessons of Ethereum’s First Five Years](#)**

Some Ethereum supporters interpreted Schoedon’s tweet as basically treason. It got to the point where he reportedly started receiving death threats—all for allegedly having strong professional and financial interests outside of Ethereum. Those angry with Schoedon believed he was shirking his Ethereum duties in favor of working at Parity Technologies, the company that is building Polkadot (again, please read [here](#) for a deeper explanation).

It seems likely that this controversy is what sparked Buterin’s disclosures. For someone so integral to the Ethereum ecosystem, it makes sense that people would want to know about his



other financial interests. "I'd definitely support more people actively involved in protocol decision-making making such statements!" Buterin wrote under his disclosures, and indeed, a couple other Ethereum developers joined in. Justin Drake, a researcher at the Ethereum Foundation, and Martin Swende both disclosed their (majority ether) holdings.

Since Buterin's disclosures, some have thanked him for his transparency. Others have chimed into to point out what a bad idea it is for the Ethereum white paper writer to put the vast majority of his eggs in one blockchain's basket. Looks like you just can't win.

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