



**Remarks by Mr. Rafi Shah  
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**Expert Roundtable on the Intersection between Video Games and Violent Extremism**

**6 December 2021  
09:30am-11:30am**

Deputy Under-Secretary-General Mr. Gregorian,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank Mr. Amarsingam for presenting his and Ms. Schlegel's findings, which will help guide this expert roundtable.

It is my pleasure to now introduce the first session on "Understanding the Motivation and Misuse of Gaming Exploitation."

The UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, given its policy leadership, coordination and capacity-building mandate on counter-terrorism will continue to remain at the forefront of emerging terrorist threats in order to support Member States, civil society and the tech sector to address the spread of violent extremist ideologies offline and online.

A broad range of stakeholders across governments, civil society, the private sector, but also the United Nations and other multilateral organizations have voiced concerns over terrorist misuse of digital spaces, including dissemination of violent extremist narratives, incitement, recruitment, communication and planning. This was a major area of discussion during the second UN CT week held earlier this year.

In the digital gaming space there were instances of game servers, chatrooms, and message boards used by terrorists which remains largely unmonitored. Terrorist groups have modified existing video games or created their own. Some, like the perpetrator of the terrorist attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019, have also "gamified" reality and physical violence by broadcasting their attacks in video game-style first-person live feed as Mr. Amrasingam noted.

As recently as January 2019, Da'esh used Telegram groups to provide supporters with specific instructions for how to use gaming platforms to recruit new members.

The use of video games is a sufficiently prominent recruitment strategy that a member of Da'esh deep web forum recently requested that the "Flames of War 2 propaganda video" be formatted to run on PlayStation Portable devices.

We also cannot ignore impact of terrorist buying virtual property and using that to promote their objectives.

Evidence of causal associations between playing video games and violent extremism is still rare. Most existing studies do not point towards a casual link between playing video games and instances of physical violence – indeed, the billions of gamers are responsible and peaceful citizens.

However, the growing prevalence of terrorist and violent extremist activity in these spaces must be recognized, better understood, prevented and countered. It puts at particular risk children and youth, who tend to have an affinity towards video games and digital social networks, and are developing their identities, cognitive capacities, and emotional intelligence.

That is why this Expert Roundtable is so timely, and we look forward to this session that will explore the misuse of gaming platforms and the motivations behind it. The initial research findings presented earlier provide a solid basis for this discussion and to identify knowledge gaps.

We need to better understand whether and what roles video-games could play, small or large, in mobilizing people to support or even perpetrate terrorist and extremist violence. What are the individual and collective dynamics? How does exposure to terrorist content or actors in the video gaming space interplay with other factors? This is critical to provide evidence-based policies, programming and tailored responses.

Today, we have convened an expert panel bringing together the private sector, CSOs, public sector, and academia to help deliver valuable insights in the digital gaming space. Please join me in welcoming:

- Dr. Alok Kanojia, Psychiatrist, Co-founder of Healthy Gamer
- Mr. Galen Lamphere-Englund, Research and Insights Director, Love Frankie

- Dr. Ahmed Al-Rawi, Assistant Professor, Simon Fraser University
- Ms. Jessica Marasa, Senior Director of Global Law Enforcement, Twitch

I look forward to the insights that our expert panel will provide, including on the features of violent extremist and terrorist activity on gaming platforms as well as how we can benefit from behavioral insights to counter this threat – an area that could be further explored through UNOCT’s International Hub in Doha for Behavioral Insights to Counter-Terrorism.

I am now pleased to introduce our moderator, Dr. Rachel Kowert, Research Director at Take This, a nonprofit organization that is helping to change the way we view the impact of video games on mental health.

Thank you for joining us. Dr. Kowert, the screen is yours.

Thank you.