

# National Counter Terrorism Centre



NCTC Newsletter - Volume 46: January 2021

## President Solih Calls Upon the Armed Forces To Be Prepared for All Threats

25 January 2021



photo: presidency.gov.mv

President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has called upon the Maldives National Defence Force to be prepared for all contemporary threats. Speaking at a special ceremony for the promotion of officers at MNDF, President Solih highlighted the close

relations Maldives enjoys with our international partners and how this has fostered improved defence cooperation with other countries. He noted that such good international standing is testament to the level of acceptance within the

...continued on page 2

community of states on our highly vocal stands against terrorism and violent extremism. The President also acknowledged that the global community accepts Maldives' contribution to international peace and stability.

“Whether it is a military threat from abroad or domestic threat that seeks to upend our nation, or even the threat of terrorism, the Maldivian armed forces must be fully prepared to face them.”

HEP Ibrahim Mohamed Solih

As a result of increased defence cooperation, MNDF and other security agencies continue to receive assistance in the form of training and equipment for emergency response, including civil defence and counter terrorism response. Given the infancy of the Maldives' security apparatus, international aid is vital to ensure our sovereignty and preparedness for any effort to undermine our sovereignty.



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“Terrorism has nothing to do with religion, Islam or otherwise. Terrorism is born of fundamentalism not of religion.”

Abhijit Naskar



# Minister of Defence Meets the Contingent From MNDF to Saudi Arabia's Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition

14 January 2021

Minister of Defence Uza. Mariya Ahmed Didi met with the contingent from the Maldives National Defence Force set to be stationed at the Counter Terrorism Center of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition in Saudi Arabia.

The Minister expressed her best wishes and shared her expectations with the members of the delegation. The Minister also noted that the participation of Maldivian soldiers in this global effort was an important step forward in the realization of President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih's "Zero Tolerance on Terrorism" policy.



In addition to the Minister, Vice Chief of Defence Force Brigadier General Abdul Raheem Abdul Latheef and Deputy Director General of Department of International Defence Cooperation and Policy, Colonel Abdul Matheen Ahmed also attended the meeting.

IMCTC was established in December 2015 with 41 member countries to coordinate and unite their efforts in the ideology, communications, counter terrorism financing, and military domains, in order to fight all forms of terrorism and extremism and to effectively join other international security and peacekeeping efforts.



THE SOLIDARITY BETWEEN MEMBERS  
OF SOCIETY IS THE MOST POWERFUL  
WEAPON AGAINST TERRORIST THREATS



photo: @SawabCenterEN



# Maldives Makes History As Its First Ever Military Contingent Joins the Counter Terrorism Centre of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition in Saudi Arabia



A contingent from the MNDF left for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to be stationed at the Counter Terrorism Centre of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC). This is the first time a military delegation from the Maldives National Defence Force has been designated to work in another country.



Letters of appointment were handed to the delegation by the Vice Chief of Defence Force Brigadier General Abdul Raheem Abdul Latheef. Colonel Mohamed Mukhtar will lead the four-man delegation in Riyadh. The four officials will be stationed in Riyadh for a year, during which time, they would work closely with other members of the coalition to share experiences and lessons learned in addition to countering and preventing violent extremism and terrorism.



DG of NCTC Brigadier General Zakariyya Mansoor also traveled with the contingent to IMCTC. During this visit, he met with senior officials from the IMCTC to discuss work done in CT and P/CVE in both countries.



As the Maldivian contingent embarks on this historic mission to Riyadh, it is a clear indication of Maldives' commitment to international peace and security despite being a small nation. The experience gained by the delegation would greatly strengthen Maldives' capacity and capabilities to work towards a resilient, tolerant, and peace-loving nation.



# **National Counter Terrorism Center Continues Briefing of the National Action Plan on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism to Stakeholders**

NCTC continued the briefing of the National Action Plan (NAP) that began on 21st December 2020. Key stakeholders for the preliminary briefings include the leading government institutions and member agencies of the Counter Radicalization Committee of NCTC. During this month's briefing, NCTC met



with officials from the Ministry of Economic Development. Department of Juvenile Justice. Ministry of Islamic Affairs. And Ministry of National Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

Officials from partner agencies highlighted the need to synergize the effort across the whole-of-government to address redundancy and make the programs more efficient. Furthermore, all agencies

echoed the need to inculcate the objectives and goals stipulated in the NAP into existing programs conducted by each respective agency.

Preventing and countering violent extremism is a priority for the Maldives. As such, the government of the Maldives seeks a combination of security and preventative measures that build on a central theme of social cohesion. Top priorities in

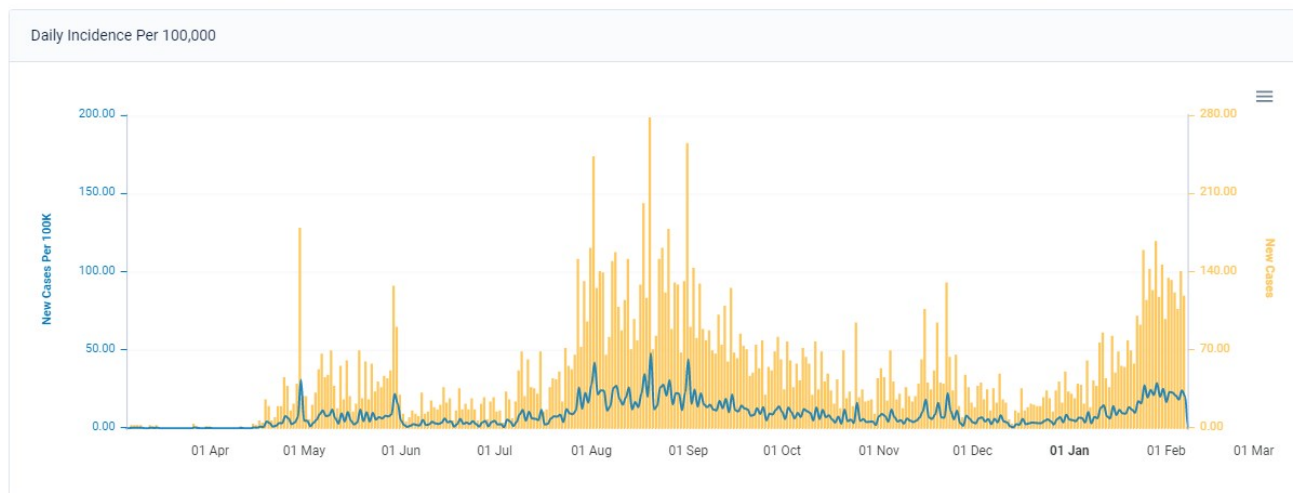


prevention and the NAP include creating better lives for young men and women addressing different socioeconomic issues that contribute towards reduction of extremism, to reduce the incidence of hate-speech and threats, and to build a cohesive and resilient society.

## COVID-19 LOCAL UPDATES

Last Updated Date: 08 February 2021 - 23:26

Total Cases	Active Cases	Recoveries	Total Deaths	Samples Tested
16,909	2,076	14,772	55	3,944
126 new cases today	204 hospitalised	87.36 recovery rate	0.33% mortality rate	438,240 total



Source: [covid19.health.gov.mv](https://covid19.health.gov.mv)

## DG of NCTC Discusses Areas of Collaboration in Capacity Building With Naif Arab University for Security Sciences

25 January 2021



DG of NCTC Brigadier General Zakariyya Mansoor met with Dr. Abdulmajeed bin Abdullah Albanyan, President of the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences (NAUSS) and the General Director of external relations Mr. Khalid Alharfash. During this meeting, officials discussed areas of collaboration, especially capacity building in

Countering Violent Extremism and security studies.

NAUSS is a close international partner of NCTC in and have collaborated on various capacities since 2019, including a two-day training course on "Extremism and Counter Terrorism" conducted in July 2019. International partners have always been of great assistance in building the national CT and P/CVE apparatus.



## **NCTC Discusses CT and P/CVE Training Requirements With Indian Defence Attaché**

*7 January 2021*

Director of NCTC Lieutenant Colonel Ibrahim Naeem met with the Defence Attaché of India to Maldives Captain Mahesh Moudgil. During this meeting officials explored possible areas of CT and P/CVE training assistance from India as well as training requirements from the Maldives. Captain Moudgil assured that India would work closely with the Maldives to help meet its training requirement

in countering and preventing terrorism and violent extremism.

India has always been the closest military ally of the Maldives and provides countless training opportunities to the Maldivian military to strengthen national CT response and enhance overall national defence and security of the nation.

## **NCTC Meets With Team of Experts on Maritime Domain Awareness From the UNODC**

*27 January 2021*



NCTC held an introductory meeting with maritime domain awareness experts from the UNODC. During this meeting, officials discussed ongoing projects and possible areas of collaboration and assistance between the two organizations. In addition, members of the team reviewed anti-terrorism legislation in the Maldives and gave feedback on strengthening the mechanism and offered assistance to improve key areas of

emergency response in the Maldives.

UNODC works closely with NCTC and different government agencies to strengthen different security sectors in the Maldives such as law enforcement, border control, CT, P/CVE, and criminal justice response to terrorism.



## **NCTC Meets With Local NGO Enlighten a Mindful Community To Identify and Discuss Areas of Collaboration**

*21 January 2021*



NCTC held an introductory meeting with Enlighten a Mindful Community (EMC), an up-and-coming local NGO led by a group of vibrant youth. During this meeting, leadership of EMC gave an overview of their organization and prospects for collaboration with NCTC. During this meeting,

participants discussed way to conduct joint programs and areas of cooperation to promote unity and increase resilience in the community.

Civil Society Organizations such as EMC play a vital role in building resilience among the youth and expands the reach of NCTC and other government agencies by engaging at the grassroots level to identify and address problems afflicting different communities across the Maldives. NCTC always welcomes and appreciates civil society actors that work to complement and enhance government efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism and build a tolerant society.

## **UNODC Regional Office in South Asia Conducts a Training Session for Officers of Maldives Correctional Service**

*13 January 2021*

UNODC Regional Office in South Asia conducted a one-day training session for officers of Maldives Correctional Service (MCS). The training focused on risk assessment of misconduct by violent extremist prisoners and conducting a risk assessment interview. 15 officers from MCS participated in the training.

Correctional facilities remain one of the leading grounds for recruitment by violent extremists and terrorists. Trainings like these would greatly empower correctional officers to identify and address extremist behavior at an early stage. The ability of MCS to segregate and identify delinquent individuals would greatly enhance the P/CVE effort in the Maldives.





# **Law Enforcement Practitioners From the Maldives Participates in UNODC's Online Cross-Regional Meeting for South Asia and South East Asia on Admissibility of Electronic Evidence in Terrorist Cases**

*20-21 January 2021*



This project is funded by  
the European Union



From  
the People of Japan



**ADMISSIBILITY OF  
ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE  
OBTAINED FROM FOREIGN JURISDICTIONS  
IN THE INVESTIGATION, PROSECUTION  
AND ADJUDICATION OF  
TERRORISM-RELATED CRIMES**

**20-21 JANUARY 2021  
09:00-12:00 UTC**

Taking place under the project "Support to Sri Lanka on Counter-Terrorism"  
carried out with funding by the European Union,  
and a complementary project funded by the Government of Japan

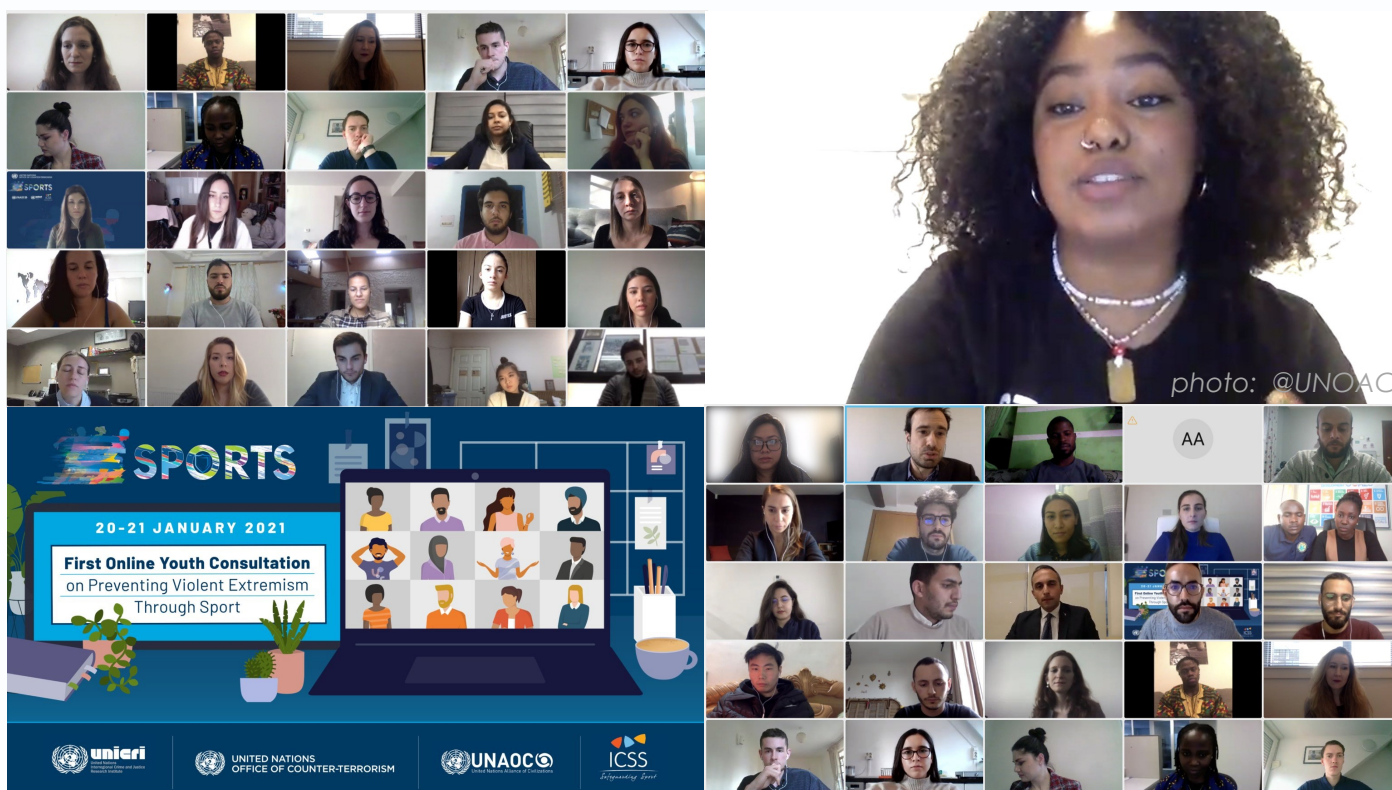
A panel of law enforcement practitioners from the Maldives participated in the online Cross-Regional Meeting for South Asia and South East Asia on "Admissibility of Electronic Evidence in Terrorist Cases." The two-day discussions conducted by the UNODC focused on electronic evidence obtained from foreign jurisdiction in the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of terrorism-related crimes. The nine-member team from the Maldives included officials from the NCTC, the Attorney General's Office, the Prosecutor General's Office, and the Maldives Police Service.

The sessions covered overview of trends and challenges related to admissibility of electronic

evidence in addition to channels for cooperating between criminal justice practitioners and good practices and lessons-learned in getting evidence through Mutual Legal Assistance. UNODC is one of the closest international partner agencies of the NCTC and their work in strengthening the criminal justice response to terrorism is one of the most vital aspects of CT response in the Maldives.

# NCTC Participates in the Online Forum “Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport – An Interactive Youth Consultation” Conducted by UN Office of Counter-Terrorism

20-21 January 2021



Director of NCTC, Lieutenant Colonel Ibrahim Naeem participated in an online forum organized by the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism on “Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport – An Interactive Youth Consultation.” The forum aimed to identify ways to promote sport as a tool to prevent violent extremism. The forum included sessions from youth leaders and discusses how policymakers can use youth as stakeholders in the decision-making process.

Youth play an integral role in society and is the biggest demographic in the Maldivian population. Therefore, youth of Maldives have a large stake in the success of the national P/CVE effort. Likewise,

NAP on P/CVE also places a lot of emphasis on empowering youth to ensure the community is resilient and tolerant. Similarly, a lot of work by NCTC and its partner agencies and Civil Society Actors work closely with youth community across the Maldives to prevent them from feeling disenfranchised and disillusioned, and work to empower them to make them contributing members of the society.



# Propaganda as a the Fifth-Generation Warfare Tool: A Concise Review of Revolutionary Aspects of Modern Warfare

*Lieutenant Colonel Amanulla A Rasheed*

## Introduction

Propaganda is the dissemination of information, either facts or arguments, rumours to half-truth, or lies to influence public opinion. It is a systematic manipulation of beliefs, attitudes, or actions using symbols. There is no single vantage point from which to observe and assess its effects. Propaganda has evolved in to a modern art through centuries and became the most formidable weapons of choice in the arsenal of statecraft. It is an exquisite and serious weapon that represents a new national security threat.<sup>1</sup>

Amid the Covic-19 pandemic, state and non-state actors across the globe have been spreading disinformation on social media about the disease and the virus that causes it, covering a range of topics including how and where the virus originated from, its potential remedies and health, social and economic impacts on societies. The creation and dissemination of disinformation on Covid-19 has pronounced potential challenges in the system-wide efforts to address the global pandemic.

'Fake news propaganda is a new trend in the cyberspace to create diversions amongst people in order to gain advantage to the benefit of a particular group. But the internet

companies and social media companies have also created systems to trace and bring down such propaganda.<sup>2</sup> Such interests in curbing negative information or disinformation have also aligned with national security purposes.

**FAKE  
NEWS**

*photo: TheDigitalArtist/pixabay.com*

Use of social media-based propaganda has recently been referred to as an exquisite 'Fifth-generation warfare' tool in strategic writings and debates. Fifth-generation warfare is a revolutionary aspect of modern warfare encountered the threat of propagation of disinformation through social media sources to manipulate public opinions for the advantage of a particular (self-interested) individuals or groups. Understanding social media-based propaganda as an ostensibly modern form of warfare can help us better understand the potential challenges faced by security systems both during crisis and strategic policy deliberations.

## Propaganda as a Revolutionary Warfare Tool

From a military or strategic lens, the alignment of the revolutionary warfare shifts in modern times has been known as network-centric warfare (NCW). This has continued to rise with defining characteristics similar to propaganda.

NCW emphasizes information superiority for battlespace efficacy. As such all mechanisms of knowledge flows are just as important as those supporting information dissemination in networks and communication systems. The latter systems are better in leverage new technologies Social media-based or modern propaganda is a better example of NCW as a fifth generation warfare tool.

Modern propaganda can enable us to identify how different actors use the concept of fifth generation warfare in gaining greater access to time-sensitive information and to acquiring advantages in information dominance for improved decision-making. While modern propaganda is taking its lead in the pre-conflict phases of statecraft there is also a growing understanding of its use as a counter measure to security threats and policy obstructions

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National security threats differ from country to country. Our collective counter propaganda strategies used against old time print media and few broadcast channels have been distorted and universally downgraded in the past centuries. However, new media platforms cause more threats, which enable modern propaganda tactics to target communities with precision, brute force or a mix of both.

Some common modern media platforms like the Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, Viber, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Twitter, Reddit, TikTok and Messenger are examples of potential social media platforms that can potentially act as network-centric warfare tools. “Social media platforms have come to dominate almost every aspect of human interaction, from interpersonal relations to the global economy” (Bradshaw, S. 2020).<sup>3</sup>

Contemporary state actors apply the same playbook used during the Cold War as part of contemporary foreign interventions mechanism to disseminate and manipulate security and strategic information by injecting conspiracy theories into social and mainstream media to intensify ethnic and cultural tensions. People behind these acts may not be representative of formal state authorities and are not even real account holders in social media sources. This is done covertly and by automated algorithms<sup>4</sup> and codes designed to amplify propaganda, fake-news and

disinformation online.

In the crime and terror nexus, far right and other extremist groups have exploited the modern propaganda as network-centric warfare tools during the Covid-19 pandemic and dominated the cyberspace to the extreme that counter narrative messaging became crucial tool to curd resulting phenomenon of violent extremism.

**“With anonymity, there is a lack of transparency about the source of information and whether news, comments or debate come from authentic voices or ones trying to distort the public sphere”**

(Bradshaw, S. 2020)

Such ideological warfare and the spreading of disinformation through online means are growing concerns for the future of international security. The use of social media as “hybrid” methods of warfare can be a broader reflection of how technological innovation has been changing the nature of crisis and conflict resolution.

### **Propaganda as a non-state actors’ strategic communication tool**

In-theater propaganda has been adopted by non-state actors as a fundamental tool to influence political landscape in contemporary societies. Few unconventional groups of non-state actors now

champion in offline outreach and they use propaganda and offline public diplomacy to systematically entrench their worldviews within the local body politic whenever and wherever conditions allowed.<sup>5</sup> Such groups used strategic communication operations to further their respective insurgent aims.

The consumed propaganda method used by the Islamic State in Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) includes audio-visual media products, everything that was broadcast and distributed in-theater through its bespoke communication infrastructure—documentaries, current affairs features, radio programs, photograph reports, newspapers, magazines, operation claims, theological literature, infographics, posters, billboards included. Moreover, the performative propaganda method used by ISIS was identified as more effective. They relied on direct interpersonal engagement and was primarily delivered by outreach officials working on the ground in Syria involving continuous face-to-face interaction with ISIS and its civilian constituents. The most crucial physical component of this propaganda activism is the nuqtah i’lamiyyah (literally, media point)—a caliphate-wide institution that facilitated in-theater propaganda dissemination—. This media point initiative was complemented by ISIS’s Center for Proselytization and Mosques, a caliphate-wide outreach unit that was dedicated to in-theater recruitment operations.

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Unlike ISIS, HAY'AT TAHRIR AL-SHAM (HTS) tends to spend much less time and effort on consumed propaganda operations. Instead, it usually opts for a more personal mode of dissemination, chiefly in the form of the media cadres it sends to mosques to hand out literature after Friday prayers. According to interview of the respondents currently residing in HTS-held territory, the two most prominent manifestations are those that are devoted to the muhajirin (foreign fighters) and those that serve in the interests of the umara' (leaders). The muhajirin facilities offer a center of gravity for social and ideological incubation among HTS fighters and are also important nodes for fundraising and recruiting.

All these propaganda activities played a crucial role in the continued strategic communications operations focusing their efforts mainly on young children, coaching them in tahfidh (process of reading, listening and reciting in order to learn Quran by heart) and Shariah jurisprudence. After all, if the mother is a committed adherent of the jihadist ideology, then she is more likely to radicalize and recruit her own children to its cause — female supporters are being used as a vector for ideology.

### Conclusion

Propaganda is the fifth-generation warfare tool" that have been used by both state and non-state actors. It is quite challenging to employ it as a national security tool for

strategic communications to prevent and counter criminal activities including international and domestic terrorism. As non-state actors like criminal groups and terrorist organizations continue to invest in NCW, it becomes ever more challenging for the state actors to collectively and effectively counter threats to international and national security. Some terrorist organizations have advanced the usage of offline propaganda tactics and are very effectively contributed to their fight. In light of these advancements in technology and social media-based campaigned promoting negative propaganda, both international and state actors need to unite in the fight against international and domestic terrorism and violent extremism. Strategic communication is the best practical approach in counter negative propaganda.

— to transform data into a desired output.

5. Winter, Charlie, and Haid Haid. Jihadist Propaganda, Offline: Strategic Communications in Modern Warfare. Report. Middle East Institute, 2018. Accessed January 20, 2021. doi:10.2307/resrep19953.1.

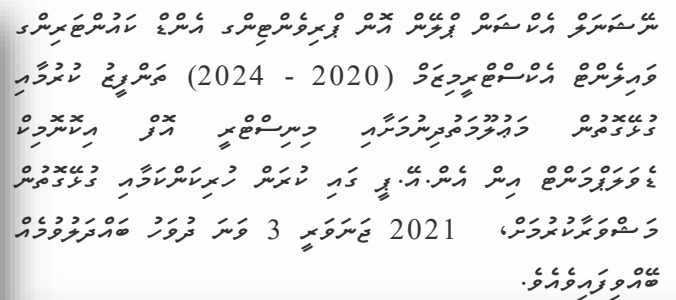
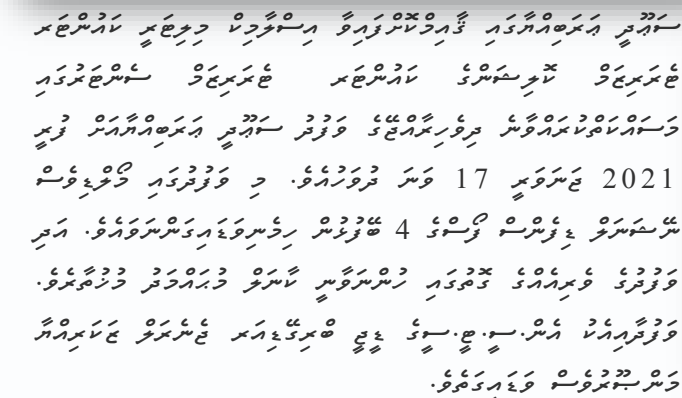
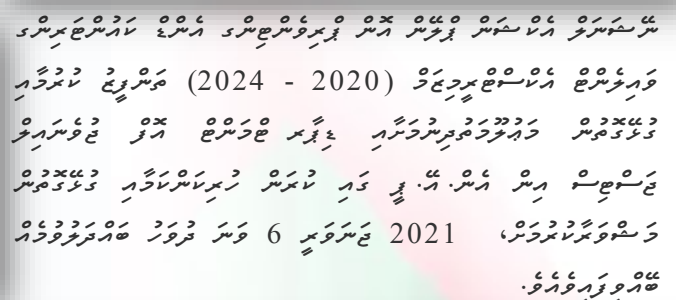
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1. Britannica, Propaganda | Definition, History, Techniques, Examples, & Facts

2. Hazrat M. Bahar (2020) Social media and disinformation in war propaganda: how Afghan government and the Taliban use Twitter, Media Asia, 47:1-2, 34-46, DOI: 10.1080/01296612.2020.1822634

3. Bradshaw, Samantha, and Centre for International Governance Innovation. Modern Conflict and Artificial Intelligence. Report. Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2020. 41-47. Accessed January 18, 2021. doi:10.2307/resrep27510.9.

4. Platforms apply algorithms — or automated sets of rules or instructions

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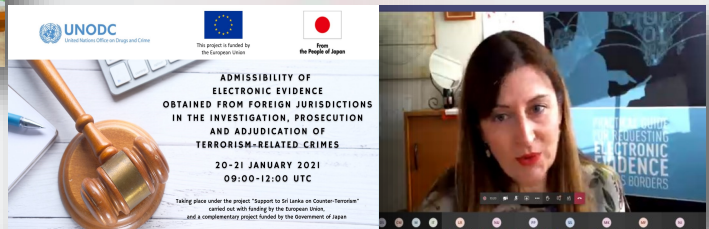
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National Counter  
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