



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology



Home Office

24 January 2025

Letter on Southport

This week, the Home Secretary announced a public inquiry into the failures that led to the Southport attack. As the Prime Minister said, there are grave questions to answer, including about how easy it was for the Southport killer to access violent online content in the years, and indeed days, before the horrific murder of three young girls.

This government has been clear that safety must be baked into services from the start, a point underlined in the Technology Secretary's draft Statement of Strategic Priorities for online safety, published in November 2024. We want to see services that deliver safe online experiences for all users and ensure there are no havens for illegal content and activity. Nothing is off the table when it comes to keeping citizens safe.

From March, platforms will be required under the Online Safety Act to remove illegal content, including violent material, to protect users and our communities from online harms. From this summer, they will also have to take action on content that is legal but not appropriate for children to be viewing, including violent content. We have been clear throughout our engagement that platforms should act now to protect users. Services have a moral responsibility to act now; there is no justification for waiting for laws to kick in.

In November 2024, the Home Office wrote to you, the major social media companies, and other industry stakeholders working with the UK Government against radicalisation online. The letter set out content that has formed the basis for prosecution under Section 2 Terrorism Act (TACT) 2006 and Section 58 TACT 2000. This list includes material from a range of proscribed organisations and instructional material that may be useful to an individual preparing to carry out an act of mass violence or terrorism.

Included in this list of illegal material is the document found on Axel Rudakubana's electronic devices, "Military Studies in the Jihad against the Tyrants: The Al-Qaeda Training Manual". As outlined above, possession of this document is a criminal offence under Section 58 of TACT 2000. We now understand that Rudakubana was able to easily obtain access to this document, and that it continues to remain available online.

The ease of access to such dangerous, illegal content is unacceptable. The Home Office is committed to working with partners in law enforcement and industry to secure the removal of this material. We must prevent further unlawful access to instructional material by those wishing to do harm to the United Kingdom. We are again requesting that you, as industry leaders, swiftly remove any unlawful material on this list available on your services, including the material used by Axel Rudakubana.

Evidence brought to trial has confirmed that Axel Rudakubana's online history also includes searches for specific content which forms part of the evidence of his obsessive interest in violence. On the morning of the attack, Rudakubana sought graphic bystander footage of the terrorist knife attack on Bishop Mari Emmanuel, which took place on 15 April 2024, on social media. This video has been removed in Australia following the issuance of a Class 1 removal notice. However, it is still available to view in the UK. We are therefore urgently asking you to ensure this is removed from your platforms to ensure that it is not used to inspire other attacks.

This trial has laid bare the potential consequences of failing to act on such content. We would now urge you to urgently review again the specific content accessed by Rudakubana and, the options available to you to remove all instances of this specific material, found to be materially relevant to this tragic case, present on your services.

Yours sincerely,

Signature

Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP
**Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and
Technology**

Signature

Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP
Home Secretary