

Suspected Coordinated and Inauthentic Hebrew- and Arabic-Language Twitter Network Promoted Content Targeting Israelis in Leadup to 2022 Legislative Election

Executive Summary

- Mandiant has identified what we assess with high confidence to be part of a coordinated and inauthentic network of Twitter accounts promoting Hebrew- and Arabic-language content targeting Israelis and pertaining to the November 2022 Israeli legislative election.
- Promoted narratives contained negative content pertaining to Israeli opposition leader and former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Orthodox community in Israel, as well as content that attempted to discourage Israelis from voting in the election.
- We do not at this time have sufficient evidence to attribute this activity to a specific actor or campaign. However, we note that the narratives appear to be consistent with other pro-Iran activity we have previously identified targeting Israeli audiences.

Background

On Nov. 1, 2022, the Israeli news outlet Haaretz [published an article](#) reporting on Twitter's removal of approximately 300 accounts "intended to influence public discourse in Israel and suppress voting in the elections" (machine translated from the Hebrew). According to the article, the accounts also attacked Netanyahu and the ultra-Orthodox community in Israel. The article cited the Israeli organization Fake Reporter as having identified and reported on this activity to Israeli security. We reviewed the accounts mentioned in the article, which were suspended, and identified potentially related accounts which formed the basis for the activity set detailed in this report. Based on anecdotal evidence, we suspect that the activity detailed here is more extensive than that we have identified.

Threat Detail

Mandiant has identified what we assess with high confidence to be part of a coordinated and inauthentic network of Twitter accounts promoting Hebrew- and Arabic-language content targeting Israelis and pertaining to the November 2022 Israeli legislative election. Promoted narratives contained negative content pertaining to Israeli opposition leader and former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Orthodox community in Israel, including allegations of corruption and misconduct on the part of Netanyahu and religious extremism on the part of the Orthodox community. Messaging directed at Arabic-language audiences also appeared intended to discourage Israeli Arabs from voting via narratives suggesting that the Israeli state and election were counterfeit and that Arabs had no place participating in them.

We do not at this time have sufficient evidence to attribute this activity to a specific actor or campaign. However, promoted narratives appears intended to sow division within Israel and cause it harm, and we note that such content is consistent with other pro-Iran activity we have [previously identified](#) targeting Israeli audiences.

Coordinated and Inauthentic Network of Twitter Accounts

We judge that the Twitter accounts identified as part of this network were operating in a coordinated and inauthentic manner, using the same tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) to achieve their objectives (Figure 1).

- All of the accounts were created on the same day, Oct. 22, 2022.
- Most of the accounts posted the same number of tweets.
- Most of the accounts posted primarily in Hebrew, but also a smaller amount of content in Arabic.
- Accounts posted similar and sometimes identical content within the same time period, including the use of similar or identical graphics, identical text, and/or the same general messaging in slightly different wording (Figure 2).
- Accounts often began their posting histories by posting a photograph or text containing apolitical content before switching to political narratives surrounding the Israeli election.
- Accounts posted replies to third-party tweets by Israeli entities and individuals, particularly media outlets and politicians.
- All of the accounts are now suspended.

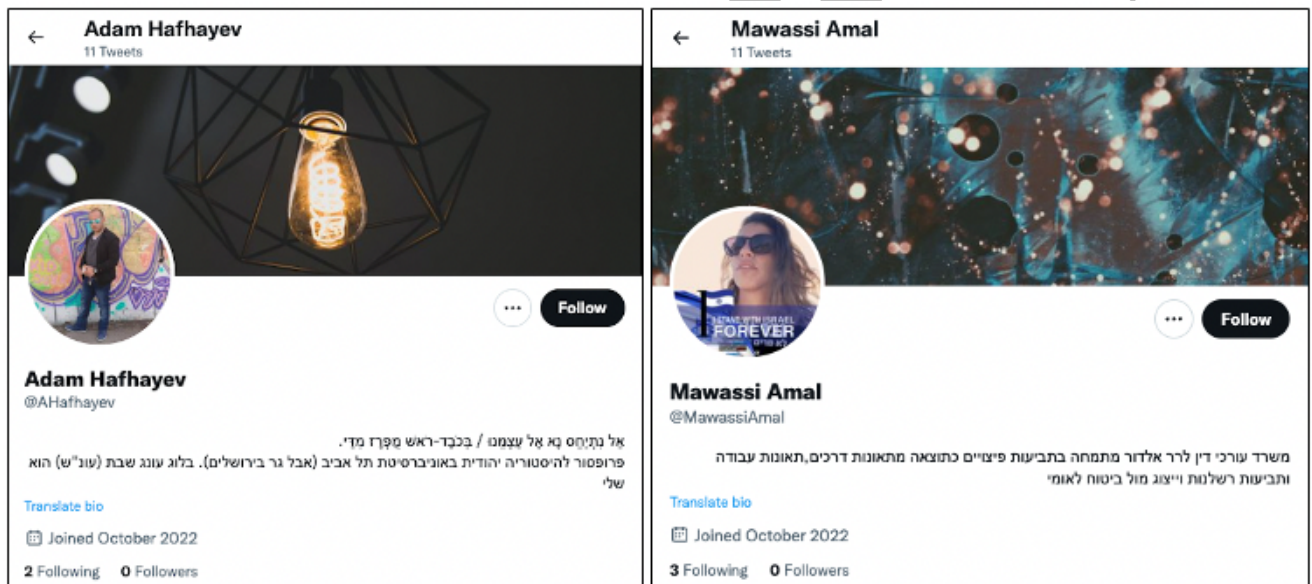


Figure 1: Sample Twitter accounts identified as part of this network



Figure 2: Sample tweets from accounts in the network containing identical graphics with similar messaging alleging “ugly behavior” on the part of Netanyahu (left) and claiming that Netanyahu influenced Trump in withdrawing from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), which resulted in accelerating Iran’s nuclear development (right)

Promoted Narratives Contained Negative Content Pertaining to Netanyahu, Orthodox Community; Attempted to Discourage Israelis from Voting

Promoted narratives contained negative content pertaining to Israeli opposition leader and former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Orthodox community in Israel, as well as content that attempted to discourage Israelis from voting in the election (Figure 3).

- Accounts promoted allegations of corruption and misconduct on the part of Netanyahu and religious extremism on the part of the Israeli Orthodox community.
- Some messages appeared potentially intended to sow division between Netanyahu and potential political allies, such as that suggesting that Netanyahu was using Itamar Ben-Gvir’s popularity for his own benefit while taking away the latter’s independence.

- Accounts claimed that Netanyahu influenced Trump to withdraw from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) (also known as the Iran nuclear deal), which resulted in the acceleration of Iran's nuclear development.
- Accounts primarily posted in Hebrew; however, targeting included Arabic-language messaging which appeared directed specifically at Israeli Arabs (Figure 4).
- Messaging directed specifically at Arabic-language audiences also appeared intended to discourage Israeli Arabs from voting.
 - Some narratives suggested that the Israeli state and election were counterfeit and that Arabs had no place participating in them. For example, some tweets called on Arabs to “abandon the Zionists and their elections,” and stated: “We are Arabs, not Jews and not Zionists!”
 - Other tweets suggested that Israel only cared about Arabs when it came to obtaining their votes, and otherwise committed atrocities against Arabs in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere.

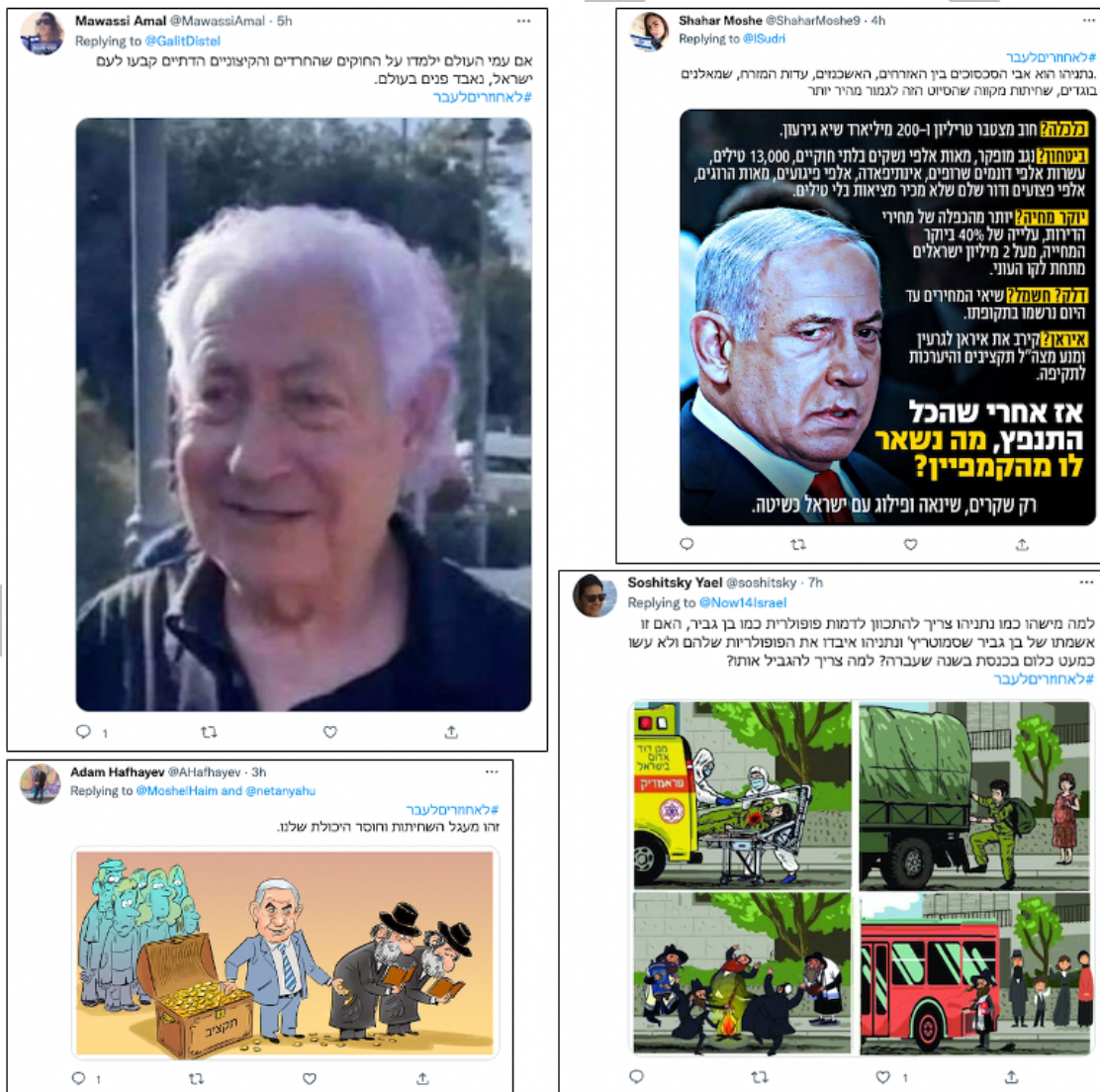


Figure 3: Tweets posted by accounts in the network promoting content pertaining to the 2022 Israeli legislative election



Figure 4: Sample tweets from accounts in the network targeting Arabic-language audiences in Israel

Insufficient Evidence to Attribute Network to a Specific Actor or Campaign

We do not currently have sufficient evidence to attribute this activity to a specific actor or campaign. Content promoted appears intended to be harmful to Israel, which leaves open a variety of possibilities for actors with a potential interest in such activity. We note, however, that these narratives appear to be consistent with other pro-Iran activity we have previously identified targeting Israeli audiences; for example, we [previously reported](#) on pro-Iran information operations that promoted narratives intended to sow division within Israel by way of driving a wedge between secular and Orthodox communities in the country. The activity detailed here also appeared to specifically target Israeli Arabs with messaging consistent with themes promoted by Iranian and pro-Iran information operations.