



MENU

Fortune.com

Subscribe



Disclaimer

TECH TWITTER

# Twitter Sued by Widow of ISIS Victim

by Jeff John Roberts

@jeffjohnroberts

JANUARY 14, 2016, 12:04 PM EST





An undated but verified image posted on a militant website on Jan. 14, 2014 showing fighters from the al-Qaida linked Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), now called the Islamic State group, marching in Raqqa, Syria.

Photograph by Militant Website/AP

## Tamara Fields claims Twitter bears responsibility for the murder of her U.S

## contractor.

Last November, a former police captain in Jordan burst into a training center and murdered unarmed people, including U.S. contractor Carl Fields, Jr. The terrorist group ISIS took credit for the atrocity and promoted it on social media.

Now, his widow, Tamara Fields, has filed a lawsuit against Twitter ( **TWTR** ▼ **-1.34%** ) claiming the social media company's alleged failure to halt ISIS propaganda is a violation of U.S. anti-terrorism laws.

Fields' lawsuit, filed in federal court in California, seeks an unspecified amount of compensatory damages and a declaration that Twitter is violating the Anti-Terrorism Act.

The complaint, posted below, shows various ISIS propaganda images posted on Twitter, and describes how ISIS accounts with thousands of followers have rapidly reappeared following the company's efforts to delete them.

“Even when Twitter shuts down an ISIS-linked account, it does nothing to stop it from springing right back up,” citing the example of an account called “@TurMedia333” that remerged as “@TurMedia334” and “@TurMedia335” after the company shut it down.

The complaint also alleges Twitter is instrumental to ISIS’s fundraising and recruitment efforts.

The lawsuit comes as Twitter tries to preserve its historic commitment to free speech against charges by politicians that it is not doing enough to shut terrorists. In response to the Fields complaint, a Twitter spokesperson provided the following statement:

“While we believe the lawsuit is without merit, we are deeply saddened to hear of this family’s terrible loss. Like people around the world, we are horrified by the atrocities perpetrated by extremist groups and their ripple effects on the Internet.”

The spokesperson also emphasized that the company has clear rules that forbid the promotion of terrorism, and that it works with law enforcement to stop them. Twitter’s own employees, meanwhile, have also been **subject to death threats** by ISIS for blocking accounts on the service that were associated with the group.

*For more, read “Google warns of ‘viral moment’ for ISIS on social media”*

The lawsuit appears to be the first attempt to hold Twitter civilly responsible under the **Anti-Terrorism Act**. Under the law, plaintiffs can sue companies that “provide material support or resources” to terrorist organizations.

In the case of Fields, however, her complaint may face a serious hurdle in the form of a law called the Communications Decency Act. The law contains a provision, known as **Section 230**, that shields online media platforms from legal responsibility for the actions of their users. But Joshua Arisohn, a lawyer for Fields, disagreed this will be a problem.

“The CDA is meant to give social media companies cover when their users commit libel. But Congress did not intend to give companies like Twitter a get out of jail free card when they knowingly hand over powerful communications tools to designated terrorist organizations so that they can recruit, fundraise and spread propaganda.”

You can read the complaint for yourself here:

[Twitter Widow Complaint](#)

