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## FLORIDA WOMAN SUES TWITTER FOR GIVING ISIS A PLATFORM

Twitter's approach to handling terrorists on its platform is already messy. Now, it's getting even messier.

Tamara Fields, a Florida woman whose husband was killed in a lone wolf terrorist attack in Jordan, has filed a lawsuit against Twitter, accusing the company of supporting the spread of ISIS by enabling ISIS leaders to recruit and fundraise on its platform. She's suing for damages.

“Without Twitter,” the suit alleges, “the explosive growth of ISIS over the last few years into the most-feared terrorist group in the world would not have been possible.”

This lawsuit is just the latest twist in an already knotty situation for Twitter. Just last month, the Turkish government fined Twitter \$50,000 for refusing to remove what it considers “terrorist propaganda.” Meanwhile, top US intelligence officials recently met with executives from Silicon Valley companies, including Twitter, to discuss how tech companies can help stem the spread of terrorist activity online.

As a company, Twitter strictly forbids users from threatening or promoting terrorism, but that change came only last year when Twitter expanded its definition of “violent threats.” And the company depends on its user base to report such activity, a practice that Fields takes issue with in the suit.

But the biggest issue is that even as the company races to take these accounts down, new accounts pop up daily. What’s more, as Twitter assumes an unwanted role of Internet censor, it’s also being placed in the position of determining who’s a terrorist, in the first place.

Twitter, for its part, rejects the lawsuit’s claims. “While we believe the lawsuit is without merit, we are deeply saddened to hear of this family’s terrible loss,” a Twitter spokesperson said in a statement. “Like people around the world, we are horrified by the atrocities perpetrated by extremist groups and their ripple effects on the Internet. Violent threats and the promotion of terrorism deserve no place on Twitter and, like other social networks, our rules make that clear.”

Fields is not only seeking damages in the suit. She’s also urging the court to enter an order declaring that Twitter has violated the Anti-Terrorism Act. If Fields wins, this could be a precedent-setting lawsuit, making Twitter accountable not only to governments looking to contain terrorist speech online, but also liable to families affected by that activity. It would also, no doubt, have implications far beyond Twitter, putting tech companies across Silicon Valley on warning.