News Item

Russian embassy in Canada weaponizes social media to fuel support for Ukraine invasion | The Conversation

By Ahmed Al-Rawi

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In order to curb the spread of disinformation by official Russian news sources, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) recently made a symbolic move by banning Russia's state-run RT news channel in Canada.

Yet this is an ineffective measure given the way social media channels controlled by the Russian Embassy in Ottawa are spreading disinformation, and how fact-checking is being weaponized by the Russian government to twist reality and confuse people about the war in Ukraine.

As a researcher who studies disinformation, I first investigated the way Arabic tweets with hashtags like #WeStandWithRussia and #RussiaHasAJustCause have been used since the beginning of this year.

New accounts

In my ongoing research, I've collected 26,440 tweets posted by 10,544 unique users who supported Russia. Almost 70 per cent of those accounts were created in 2022, including 4,052 accounts (38.4 per cent) in just one day on Feb. 15, 2022, and 5,457 accounts (51.7 per cent) in the month of February alone.

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