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COMMENT
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Watchdog is essential to curb hate on social media

FIVE Birmingham mosques were attacked with a sledgehammer yesterday.

A week ago, Muslims praying in two mosques in New Zealand were gunned down by a far-Right extremist.

Unfettered access to social media, tech companies not willing to take off hate material and better-organised online activity by extremist groups have created the perfect storm for the ideology of hate to increase.

We have been saying that the following steps need to be implemented.

Firstly, it cannot be "business as usual" for social media companies.

Their approach of not removing anti-Muslim hate material in the guise of free speech is not going to wash any more. They rightly remove Islamic State comments and accounts, so why not for groups marginalising and promoting hate and



violence against fellow British citizens.

Hypocrisy

There is a need for an oversight function over social media companies with an independent arbiter.

The firms must also be forced to be part of this process.

They have been a law unto themselves for far too long.

Secondly, we need more work in schools facilitating discussions between young people to counter hateful rhetoric.

We cannot have a situation where Jews and Muslims feel they cannot be comfortable within educational environments.

Thirdly, we have to counter far-Right rhetoric and undermine it at every point.

This includes showing up the hypocrisy and destructiveness of a set of ideologies which give the impression that problems are due to "other communities".

The British people have led Europe in the fight against hate.

Now we must stand up and make sure that it does not gain any foothold on our island.