PAPER ON FALSE INFORMATION
ABOUT THE AZERBAIJAN-ARMENIAN CONFLICT
27 September - 10 November 2020
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Introduction

Since October 2016, Teyit has been striving to track and understand misinformation online and working on ways to improve the information ecosystem. In respect to our aim to equip users with critical thinking and digital literacy skills, we reached a different country in June 2020 and established Teyit Azerbaijani. We seek to address and tackle misinformation in Azerbaijan, a country, where the language, culture and agenda bear similarities to Turkey. Consequently, we were able to publish 66 fact-checks in Azerbaijani up until 10 November 2020.

Immediately after the launch of Teyit Azerbaijani, the tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia, which had already been ongoing for 30 years, turned into a low-intensity conflict in July 2020. The tension between countries was exacerbated in Nagorno-Karabakh this time. The clashes intensified on 27 September 2020 and a ceasefire agreement was signed on 10 November 2020. The conflict between countries took place on land and air, but also online.

As emotions were escalating, it soon transformed into a crisis where misinformation proliferated. Teyit published a total of 40 fact-checks related to the conflict in Turkish and Azerbaijani. 11 fact-checkers worked to finalise the claims as fact-checks.

During the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, we tracked the suspicious claims closely and published fact-checks. In this paper, we will draw from our insights gained during the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between 27 September-10 November 2020. In the paper, you can find the most common types of false information that spread during the conflict and the platforms where misinformation is spread the most. In addition we will compare the user reports during this crisis with other crises (meaning the reports submitted to Teyit by users themselves through different platforms asking Teyit to fact-check certain suspicious content). The report aims to reveal the causes of the misinformation problem by interpreting the data and offering insights into the claims that are spread during the conflict. It eventually aims to improve digital literacy.

a) A brief background of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict

The tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia, both former Soviet countries, dates back to the 1990s. The Nagorno-Karabakh region is located within the borders of Azerbaijan and has no border with Armenia. In a report published by Human Rights Watch, it is stated that the tension that started in 1988 when both countries were in the Soviet Union turned into a full-fledged war in 1992, and by 1994, both sides lost 25,000 civilians and soldiers. The peace calls of the Minsk Group formed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the calls of the United Nations (UN) for the withdrawal of Armenian forces from Nagorno-Karabakh lands did not suffice to solve the problem.

Although a ceasefire was signed on 12 May 1994, many people lost their lives in the clashes that took place at certain periods on the border. The most violent conflict in the region after this ceasefire took place in April 2016. This short tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia was also called “The Four-day War” in Nagorno-Karabakh. Finally, in July 2020 Tovuz clashes broke out and lasted from 12 July to 23 July. Since Teyit Azerbaijani began its publications in June, we were able to track suspicious information online and labelled seven claims as false. The clashes began in Nagorno-Karabakh on 27 September 2020, just two months after what happened in Tovuz, and soon turned into a war. Later, both countries declared mobilisation and partial mobilisation.
Labelling a claim as false is one of the most common conclusions we end up with in a fact-check. Because Teyit examines viral claims, which raises doubts, in accordance with its prioritisation criteria.

Within Teyit’s four years of efforts to tackle false information, we examined many fact-checks. Our experience helped us to adapt and coin some Turkish vocabulary items covering the basic concepts in the misinformation ecosystem. For example, the types of false information are one of those efforts. While these concepts reveal more on why a certain piece of false information is misleading or false, these categories also enable users to correctly identify any suspicious content. In other words, we would like to show that the problem and the disorder, generally conceptualized under “fake news,” actually include various types.

First Draft’s executive director, Claire Wardle, who studies information disorder, proposed seven categories of the information disorder in 2017 to emphasise that the problem is complex. Having adopted these categories at Teyit, below are the “seven most common types of false information:"

**False connection:** Photos, videos, quotes or headlines that are wrongly connected to an actual event.

**Misleading:** Misleading projection of the real meaning.

**False Context:** Retelling true information by removing the incidents, situations, or relations.

**Manipulation:** Information altered via picking, adding or removing.

**Parody:** Content prepared for entertainment or teasing and have the potential of misleading users.

**Imposter:** Imitated content or accounts of a person or an institution.

**Fabricated:** Content fabricated and that is not correct at all.

Based on the claims we face in times of crisis, we believe that compiling the types of false information is a good practice and that this practice may lead us to important conclusions. Based on this assumption, the paper focuses on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which began on 27 September 2020. Yet the paper also includes the conflicts in July, as they can be interpreted as the “footsteps” of the war. Thus, we were able to identify the types of false information that were spread during such conflicts and we were able to make comparisons to other times of crises.

“Data on the types of misinformation, the number of interactions, the actors sharing and spreading misinformation, the distribution of the claims on social networks and news sites are only based on Teyit’s work.”
Footsteps of the war: Conflicts in July

Months before the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict began, tensions escalated in the Tovuz district located at the Armenian-Azerbaijani border. During the tension in July 2020, Teyit Azerbaijani published seven fact-checks. Six fact-checks published between 16-29 July 2020 were labelled as false connection. In other words, 85.7% of the claims about the Tovuz conflicts included images and videos that are wrongly connected to an actual event. The remaining claim was labelled as fabricated content (14.3%).
The crisis is growing: Conflicts in September

After the developments in the Tovuz region, the clashes in Nagorno-Karabakh soon turned into a hot war. We have written 33 fact-checks about the claims that are directly linked to the conflict between 27 September and 10 November 2020. 32 of these fact-checks were labeled as “false” and the other one was labelled as “mixed.”

As in July, the most common type of false information during the war was false connection. 22 of the 33 fact-checks were labelled as false connection. In other words, 69.9% of the claims related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict had false images, actually associated with unrelated events. Yet, due to the magnitude and impact of the conflict, different types of false information also came out. Four of the claims were labelled as imposter content and another four were labelled as manipulated content. The ratio of these to all claims was 12%. Two of the 33 fact-checks were labelled as fabricated content, one as false context and another one as misleading content.

* The sum may not reflect the exact number of fact-checks, as more than one type of false information can be labelled to a single fact-check.
In comparison to other crises

These kinds of conflicts also create a crisis for the information ecosystem as well, since an immense amount of false information is spread during these times. To this end, we compared the conflicts between Azerbaijan and Armenia to the Operation Peace Spring and the Covid-19 pandemic, which can also be classified as a time of crisis. We chose Operation Peace Spring because it was similarly a conflict, and secondly we chose the Covid-19 epidemic because it is another type of crisis. Our insights on the types of false information in different times of crisis are thus significant. On the other hand, the types of false information about a relatively greater crisis covering almost a year can provide us a deeper insight.

The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) launched a cross-border operation in northern Syria, called Operation Peace Spring in October 2019. Teyit labelled 27 claims about the operation as false. Of the claims labelled as false, 23 were false connection, similar to other times of conflict and war. The ratio of the fact-checks labelled as false connection in Operation Peace Spring to all the claims about the operation is 85.1%, which stands out as an important figure. During the operation, three claims (11.1%) were labelled as misleading content, two claims as manipulated content, another two as false context and only one claim as fabricated content.

The novel coronavirus epidemic broke out in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019 and spread all over the world within a short time, turning into a pandemic. The first official Covid-19 case was recorded in late March 2020 in Turkey. Regarding the ongoing crisis, Teyit has published 194 fact-checks as false so far. 67 of them were labelled as fabricated content. Fabricated content (34.5%) is followed by false connection with 57 fact-checks. During the Covid-19 crisis, the false context is 29.3% and misleading content 25.5%. 18 claims were labeled as false context, 13 as manipulated content, eight as parodies, and one claim was labelled imposter content. Unlike other times of crisis, during the pandemic, the most common type of false information is fabricated content, not false connection.
TYPES OF FALSE INFORMATION BASED ON 194 COVID-19 RELATED FACT-CHECKS LABELLED AS FALSE

34.5% 67x FABRICATED

29.3% 57x FALSE CONNECTION

25.5% 49x MISLEADING

9.2% 18x FALSE CONTEXT

7.2% 14x MANIPULATION

4.1% 8x PARODY

0.5% 1x IMPOSTER

* The sum may not reflect the exact number of fact-checks, as more than one type of false information can be labelled to a single fact-check.
The nature of the crisis also determines the type of false information

It is perhaps possible to say that the events that can be classified as crises can have different backgrounds and processes. Thus, the claims about events such as natural disasters, fires and wars and the claims about health and politics tell different things. If there is a wildfire in a place, an image from the area is usually what is searched for. Yet, people remember wars or conflicts by visuals and photographs. In fact, photos associated with those moments can stay as memories for years. However, in some cases, claims are important, not the images. For example, take the claim “onion is good for coronavirus:” A visual of an onion is not what people are most curious about, it is the function.

From this perspective, it is no surprise that the most common type of false information is false connection in times of war and conflict. It is inevitable that some old images or photos related to other events are shared together with the actual images. To drive attention or to make clickbaits, some may prefer to distribute old images. Sometimes stock images can be perceived as accurate and up-to-date as well. Yet, it is no coincidence that false connection is 85.7% in the conflicts in July, 69.9% in the conflicts in September and 85.1% in the Operation Peace Spring.

On the other hand, health-related crises trigger other emotions; like fear and anxiety. The most common type of false information during the pandemic up until November 2020 was fabricated content (34.5%). An important factor underlying this can be conspiracy theories. Additionally, the claims usually focus on functionality rather than photographs or images.

Which actors did falsely connect the events?

We wanted to include data from algorithms and data analysis tools to help us interpret the situation. To this end, we worked with Turnusol.org, one of the teams in Factory, Teyit’s incubation programme.

Turnusol.org defines itself as a social enterprise. It focuses on developing solutions to the following areas: misleading content that hampers free circulation of accurate information, misleading content that aims to manipulate society, prejudiced content, judgments and misinformation, hate speech or discriminatory language. It does so by using information technology and artificial intelligence.

Turnusol.org used an interface they developed while analysing the network. After transferring our data to the system in this interface, the system mapped the results. This data is shaped through Teyit’s data based on the conflict under “Who shared?” and “Result.” The team made use of Python libraries such as Pandas and NetworkX. Turnusol.org resorted to the ”Network analysis” method in order to draw a conclusion from the data presented by Teyit.

Dr. Suat Atan explains their method as follows: “When we need to think of the sources and actors that produce false information together, traditional data visualisation may be insufficient because traditional data visualisation is generally based on displaying just one type of information independently from any remaining elements. To that end, data science offers us another useful visual identification tool: Network analysis. Network analysis helps us to consider different actors (person, institution, concept) that have intersecting aspects together.”

We know that the most common type of false information during the conflict is false connection. When we evaluate this data in terms of “News Source-Misinformation Type” by the network analysis method, we see that the false information is mostly spread via Twitter, followed by Instagram and Facebook respectively. YouTube and TikTok are now among these platforms as well. These platforms hosted all seven types of false information. On the other hand, we see that the closed messaging platform Telegram, in regards to this crisis, also hosted false information that can be labelled as false connection. News websites such as Takvim, Yeniçağ, Yeni Akit are also among the media organisations that spread false information labelled as false connection during the conflict.
DISSEMINATION OF FACT-CHECKS LABELLED AS “FALSE CONNECTION” ON SOCIAL NETWORKS AND WEBSITES
One of the other important indicators in this paper was the user reports submitted to Teyit as suspicious content. Teyit classifies the user reports that are submitted through its channels such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook in a software called Dubito. These data reveal patterns left behind by the crises. In addition, this reporting system is also important for fact-checkers as they notify us of the claims that may not be tracked by Teyit’s fact-checkers.

While focusing on the reports, we specified the dates from 27 September 2020 to 10 November 2020; from the time that the conflict began to the day the ceasefire was signed. In this period, Teyit has opened cases for 71 different claims in Dubito. A total of 33 claims about the clashes were finalised and published on Teyit and Teyit Azerbaijani. In other words, almost one of every two claims (46.4%) about the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia has been finalised.

18 of the 71 claims entered Dubito as a result of the user reports, coming from different platforms. In other words, the rate of suspicious posts reported to Teyit was 25.4% in this conflict. 40 unique reports were sent to 18 claims. Thus, there were an average of 2.2 reports per claim during the conflict. Three of the 18 claims sent to Teyit as suspicious content were finalised. In other words, the rate of the fact-checked claims sent as reports corresponds to 16.6%.

Here are the three most frequently reported claims by users:

- **Ten** reports: The photo claimed to show black people protecting the statue of Atatürk in Washington DC from Armenian attacks
- **Seven** reports: The claim that Armenian soldiers fed the dead Azerbaijan-Armenia soldiers to pigs
- **Four** reports: The claim that Armenian flag was reflected on buildings in Dubai

Among those most reported claims, we see some already fact-checked claims. These are the images allegedly showing that the statue of Atatürk in Washington DC is protected by black people against the Armenian attacks and the other claim that the Armenian flag was reflected on the buildings in Dubai in October 2020.
Fact-checkers were proactive

Another key finding concerns the fact checks. We found out that the fact-checkers at Teyit were proactive during this time of crisis. Some claims had already been filed by the fact-checkers even before the user reports were submitted to Teyit. Between 27 September and 10 November, Teyit filed cases on 53 claims, taking its publication principles into account; such as virality, importance and urgency. In short, 74.6% of 71 claims were filed by Teyit fact-checkers.

30 of 53 claims filed by Teyit’s fact-checkers without any reports were finalised. This means that the rate of the fact-checked claims was 56.6%.

User reports to Teyit during the Operation Peace Spring

Teyit filed 104 claims in Dubito during Operation Peace Spring, which lasted about one and a half months, like the crisis between Azerbaijan and Armenia. 25 of these cases were published, namely 24% of them were finalised. During the Operation Peace Spring, 149 unique reports were submitted to Teyit. Teyit received 40 user reports in the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia. This means that approximately four times more reports were submitted during the operation in 2019. An explanation to this is the fact that the Peace Operation Spring was directly related to Turkey.

During the Operation Peace Spring, 85 claims were filed based on user reports. In other words, 81.8% of all claims were due to these reports. 19 claims were examined by Teyit’s fact-checkers at that time, independently from the reports. The rate of the claims filed by Teyit’s fact-checkers is 18.2.

It should be highlighted that the situation has been reversed in the crisis between Azerbaijan and Armenia. As stated before, between 27 September and 10 November 2020, while Teyit’s fact-checkers examined 74.6% of all claims without prior user report, the rate for the user reports was 25.4.
Predicting false information

There are different reasons that enable fact-checkers to detect suspicious information before they are notified by user reports. Teyit has faced many events that can be defined as a crisis since its establishment in 2016. Teyit always builds on the lessons from the previous crises. This means that it eventually becomes much easier to predict the platforms, types of false information and to foresee our actions to tackle them. Thus, predictions allows fact-checkers to be more proactive and they can thus outstrip user reports.

Finally, it should be emphasised that Teyit Azerbaijani, established in June 2020, and one of our fact-checkers, who is familiar with the region, had exceptional roles in Teyit’s efforts to tackle false information during the conflict.

d) Actors spreading false information

The conflict-related false information we encountered online were written in eight different languages, including Azerbaijani and Armenian, as well as Russian and Turkish.

The claims were mostly shared on social media between 27 September and 10 November. 33 fact-checks were shared in 8 different social media platforms and 28 different news websites. 33 fact-checks mentioned 170 social media posts. 139 posts (81.7%) were on social networks including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Telegram, YouTube, TikTok, Weibo and VKontakte. 139 posts in these 8 different social networks got 1,723,532 interactions. We will now talk about the 28 news websites together with the remaining 31 posts in the following chapter.
Twitter stood out as the platform where misinformation spread the most during the conflict. The same conclusion was also drawn by Turnusol.org in its network analysis before. 64 claims among 139 were spread on Twitter. In other words, 46% of the claims were shared on Twitter. As the social media platform where misinformation was shared the most during the conflict, Twitter was also at the top based on the interaction rates of the claims. 668,976 of the total 1,723,532 interactions on social media channels came from Twitter. This corresponds to 38.8% of the total interaction.

Facebook is directing attention globally as a platform where false or misleading information causes concern. Facebook comes first as a social media platform which is associated with false and misleading information the most. This fact alone emphasises the importance of Teyit’s cooperation with Facebook under Facebook’s third-party fact-checking programme. In our research on the conflict, Facebook came just after Twitter, as the second platform where misinformation was shared the most. 34 of the total 139 social media posts were on Facebook. In other words, 24.4% of the false claims about the conflict were on Facebook. The total interaction of those false contents on Facebook was 192,463 (11.1% of the total interaction).

Instagram was the third platform to stand out. 24 of 139 false posts about the conflict were shared here. Instagram, which came after Twitter and Facebook, constitutes 17.2% of the total claims. The false information on Instagram received 134,607 interactions, namely 7.8% of the total interaction.

Social media as a place for false information
DISTRIBUTION OF FACT-CHECKED CLAIMS ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

24.46% 34x FACEBOOK

17.26% 24x INSTAGRAM

46.04% 64x TWITTER

1.43% 2x TIKTOK

2.87% 4x TELEGRAM

5.03% 7x YOUTUBE

2.20% 3x WEIBO
Unlike other times of crisis, with this conflict, Telegram entered the list. Telegram ranks first in the Google Play store in Azerbaijan and Armenia. At Teyit, we immediately started tracing Telegram since the first days of the conflict for suspicious content. Four of 139 false posts on social networks were shared on Telegram channels. Although there are only four posts on the platform, the interaction of these posts got was 242,900. In other words, Telegram alone was responsible for 14.09% of the total 1,723,532.
The role of news websites

18.2% of the false information during the crisis from 27 September 27 2020 onwards was spread by various websites. 28 different websites, including foreign sources, reported false claims. Among these websites, the role of Yeni Akit stood out. Yeni Akit became the only website that included three different false claims such as the photo showing the current Armenia-PKK cooperation in Karabakh, the post of the Pakistan Ministry of Defense as “Three states, one nation” and the projection of Armenian flag on the buildings in Dubai during the clashes.

At least one piece of false information was detected on frequently visited news websites such as Hürriyet, Haber 7, Milliyet, Mynet, Sabah, Takvim, Yeniçağ. Naturally, the multidimensionality of the crisis led us to other websites based on different countries: Websites such as Eurasia Daily from Russia, Massispost from Armenia and Sputnik Azerbaijan service from Azerbaijan and Publika.

It should also be noted that the total number of daily visitors to news sites that share false or misleading claims is 27,936,730. According to Worldometer, as of 2020, Azerbaijan has a population of 10,139,177 and Armenia 2,965,301. In other words, the number of users who encounter potential false information on news sites is more than twice the population of Azerbaijan and Armenia.
Misinformation spreads more than the true stories

Misinformation spreads more than the fact-check. This was shown by the number of interactions the false content and its fact-checked version got. The social media posts claiming that the images of the conflict are from Karabakh, got 474,200 interactions. Teyit’s fact-check which labels the claim as false only attracted 19,133 interactions.

The social media posts about the confidential document allegedly showing that Turkey sent 120 Syrian fighters to Azerbaijan received 165,478 interactions. However, Teyit’s fact-check on the issue only received 16,754 interactions. The last example is not different either. The social media posts about the photos allegedly showing that the black people are protecting the statue of Atatürk in Washington DC received 130,868 interactions. However, the fact-check summarising the true version of the story only managed to get 27,143 interactions.

According to a study conducted by the University of Warwick in the UK in 2016, it takes about two hours to verify an accurate Twitter post, and 14 hours to verify a false post. This is an important factor to take into account in the spread of misinformation. It is the difficulty of verification and the reach of the fact-check that are crucial in times of crisis.
At Teyit, we began tracing the conflicts since July. Escalating emotions fueled in such times of conflicts can become harmful for a person or a particular social group. That's why the fact-checking practices are of exceptional importance. Of course, tracking accurate information can also be equally difficult.

In addition to our methodology, the principles of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) serve as an important benchmark. Teyit has become a signatory to IFCN’s Code of Principles since 2017, having proved its transparency and impartiality. In 2019, these principles were updated and also asked for comprehension of the actor’s motivation who spreads misinformation. We believe that this also requires an ability to predict. Some claims in this process, led us to look at the sources and actors from a different perspective. We eventually spotted a new propaganda method.

We noticed a Facebook account named "Fact Check Karabakh" with a claim on October 8. It had shared its first post on 30 September 2020, three days after the conflicts between the two countries became "official." In a post, widely shared on Azerbaijani media, a soldier in the photo, an alleged prisoner, was declared not to have come from Azerbaijan and this information was "fact-checked" with a post by an account called Fact Check Karabakh. The post stated that the images were taken from a movie scene. The post, which directly points out a certain individual, also claimed that the Armenian supporters preferred this photoshop in order to prove that they were strong.

At first, we tried to get in touch with the admins of this new account, but didn't get any response. Later we found that the video was shared by a user named "Armenisch88" and we tracked the original video.

When we searched for the account by its name, we found that the video was shared in a closed Telegram group called "Armenian Radical." In this closed messaging group, mostly Pro-Armenian images and news were being shared.

Throughout the video, they made a soldier repeat the words of another man. The words "İlham Aliyev" and "Suka" were among the ones that could be heard. We knew that the common language that Azerbaijan and Armenians could speak was Russian. Suka meant "b*tch" in Russian. The people who recorded the video made him swear at the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. So, it concluded that the video showed a state of captivity and the soldier was an Azerbaijani soldier.

Yet the black area of the individual’s cheekbone and the uniform revealed that the video shared by Fact Check Karabakh and the image shared on the account named "Armenian Radical" had close similarities. After a reverse image search, it turned out that the video is not outdated.

However, another claim revealed at that time changed our direction. It was claimed that the person in the video was an actor and that he had assumed the role of an Azerbaijani soldier. His name was also disclosed. It was stated that he was not a captured Azerbaijani soldier, but an Armenian actor living in Moscow. His photographs were published. The person in the video, Roman Manusadzhian, made a statement on his Facebook account stating that he could not believe what happened and was worried about his life, and said that he was an advertising producer.

We decided not to publish the fact-check as there was no satisfactory evidence to show whether the video was fabricated or not. There were still uncertainties: the captive soldier footage was not outdated, a producer was targeted, and the captive soldier in the video could not be identified.

But here is our conclusion: The methods used by the Fact Check Karabakh were inconsistent and the account was not transparent. This suspicious account also provides insight into the limits and methods of “fact-checking.” It is an indicator that we need to examine the motivation behind a certain claim and dig deeper in order to understand what it actually serves for.
Another example is a claim that mercenaries from third countries were sent to Azerbaijan and Armenia. Although the countries do not make explicit statements, the images began spreading on social media with similar claims. We investigated those claims and published an in-depth article. This article deals with the photos shot in a cargo plane and focuses on the claim that Turkey sent mercenaries to Azerbaijan, who were members of the Syrian National Army.

Rather than quick content creation about any claim, we first ensure the quality and reliability of our evidences and sources in order to draw accurate conclusions. This allows us to build trust in our relationship with our followers, to maintain our objectivity, and create content that we can always hold on to. This means that part of the misinformation problem is the “biased” or “non-transparent” fact-checking platforms. As of November 2020, Fact Check Karabakh continues its publication, although not as regular as before.

Conclusion and final word

The tension in July 2020 turned into a new war in September between Armenia and Azerbaijan, creating an environment where misinformation was widely and rapidly spreading online. In this paper, we shared our insights in the light of the fact-checks published by Teyit. We have seen that in times of crises such as conflicts and wars, false connection is the most common type of misinformation. Yet this is not always the case in different types of crisis, as we illustrated with a reference to Covid-19.

This is nothing new. Images and photographs disseminate more during wars and conflicts. In essence, it would be a good approach to double-check photos and videos and to trace them during such conflict-based crises. Besides, based on the data obtained from the user reports that are submitted to Teyit during this period, it is revealed that the fact-checkers detect and take action before they are notified of the reports by the internet users.

While efforts to tackle misinformation expand globally, those who produce false information are not sitting still. We have also spotted so-called “fact-checking” organizations. These organizations were not transparent nor impartial and their sole purpose was to spread propaganda not accurate information. The structures of these organizations and the so-called fact-checking platforms themselves could be the subject of another exciting paper. For now, it seems reasonable to remain skeptical of organisations that try to present themselves as “fact-checking platforms.” To resist these attempts, here are some tips: Check its publication history, check what kind of claims it generally deals with, determine whether the organisation is transparent, look if an objective language is used and ensure that there are references to sources. These practical tips will also help improve your media literacy skills.

Within the misinformation ecosystem of the crisis between Azerbaijan and Armenia, social media platforms were the channels where false information was shared the most. In addition to the common social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, we also witnessed the active role of Telegram, a closed messaging application, in the spread of false information during this crisis. While tracking misinformation in a specific country, we realised that we should also look at the platforms with the highest number of internet users in that specific country in order to reach more claims. We have seen that in the times of the crisis, false information attracted much more interaction than its fact-check.

This paper, which covers 44 days of conflict, can serve as a guide to the misinformation ecosystem. Similar papers and research analysing such times of crisis are also useful since they provide deeper insights for media professionals and organizations. Teyit will continue tracking suspicious information, promote digital literacy and strengthen “the suspicion muscle” of the internet users in Azerbaijan as well as in Turkey.
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