

Comedian Sacha Baron Cohen who rose to fame with his Borat and Ali G. characters, doesn't find anything funny about the role social media and tech companies like Google, Facebook, and Twitter play in spreading hate speech and misinformation. He issued a dire warning Thursday evening in a speech hosted by the Anti-Defamation League.

"Democracy, which depends on shared truths is in retreat, and autocracy, which depends on shared lies is on the march. Hate crimes are surging, as a murderous attacks on religious and ethnic minorities. Now what do all these dangerous trends have in common? I'm just a comedian and I act. I'm not a scholar, but one thing is pretty clear to me: all this hate and violence is being facilitated by a handful of internet companies that amount to the greatest propaganda machine in history."

"Voltaire was right when he said: 'those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.' And social media lets authoritarians push absurdities to billions of people. Now in their defence, these social media companies have taken some steps to reduce hate and conspiracies on their platforms, but these steps have been mainly superficial."

"I believe that it's time for a fundamental rethink of social media and how it spreads hate, conspiracies and lies."

"Now, last month, however, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook delivered a major speech that, not surprisingly, warned against new laws and regulations on companies like his. Well, some of these arguments are simply, pardon my 'French', bullshit."

"we're not asking these companies to determine the boundaries of free speech across society. We just want them to be responsible on their platforms."

Twitter's ban on political ads went into effect on Friday, but larger rival Facebook has refused to budge on its policy of not fact-checking posts or political ads.