

Our Imperative

No Hate No Violence



Toolkit on combating hate speech and prevention of violent extremism

The importance of peace education, mental health and media



Our Imperative

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A Letter from the Editor

Dear reader,

Thank you for deciding to read or browse this publication, in which young people have invested a lot of knowledge, effort, and work, with the desire to share their knowledge and experience with you.

This publication was created as a result of the project Our Imperative: No Hate, No Violence as part of the Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism (iDove) project, which was realized by the Youth for Peace organization from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The project aims to decrease hateful rhetoric, which is often a prelude to hate crimes and violence, and strengthen regional cooperation to help youth see each other through the lens of understanding and empathy instead of hatred and animosity. This will open the horizons of young people not just to youth from their region but also from other parts of the world, strengthening their intercultural and interfaith competencies. Project activities, including this publication, will empower and equip youth to find and create alternatives to extreme narratives of hatred and divisions in one of the most conflicted regions in Europe and internationally.

Therefore, this publication aims to provide the theoretical framework and practical guide-

lines on the topics of hate speech and prevention of violent extremism through practical examples of workshops and highlighting the importance of mental health, peace education, and the role of the media.

The publication is written bilingually (b/h/s and English) and is intended for everyone interested in this topic, from young people and civil society organizations to international organizations and government institutions.

Enjoy reading, and don't forget the importance of your role in the fight against hate speech and violent extremism!

Our Imperative: No Hate, No Violence!

Youth for Peace

Youth for Peace was founded and run by us, young people. We have gained experience through years of working with youth in the NGO sector. Our members come from different ethnic and religious groups, which were very often in conflict in the past. We draw our strength from the desire for sustainable coexistence in the same country, organizing a number of different activities for young people and conveying to them our own experience of dialogue and coexistence.

The work of our Organization is based on sharing experiences by providing a positive example of coexistence and spreading the unity spirit among the youth. The Organization's primary mission and goals are to gather young people, give education and encourage activism. From experience, it is evident that young people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina do not have the opportunity to meet, socialize, talk, learn from each other, share life experiences and problems, nor do they have any joint activities. Also, young people lack an understanding of the fundamental values of different religions, including their own. Thanks to the violently burdened past, politics, society, and media are placing distorted images on young people, which creates an obstacle to building a bright, shared future.

Learn more about YfP:

www.peace.ba

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iDove

Interfaith Dialogue on Violent Extremism (iDove) is an international grassroots youth-led movement that empowers young people worldwide to play an active role in preventing violent extremism by employing the soft power of religion.

Learn more about iDove:

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Hate speech vs. freedom of expression

The first step towards recognizing and later preventing the spread or promotion of any form of hate speech is knowing the difference between the terms “hate speech” and “freedom of expression.” To clarify these distinctions, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance clearly states in one of its recommendations which forms can be classified as hate speech: “(...) form of advocating, promoting or inciting vilification, hatred or defamation of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotypes, stigmatization or threats in relation to such a person or group of persons, as well as justifying all previously mentioned forms

of expression, based on race, color, origin, national or ethnic affiliation, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status.” (Pramar, 2018)

On the other hand, when we talk about freedom of speech or expression, the most common definition says the following: “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers.” (Glava II – Slobode, Članak 11 - Sloboda izražavanja i informiranja)

However, point two of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights says the following: “The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary for a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.” (Title II – Freedoms, Article 11)

The legal regulations of the Western Balkans countries (including Bosnia and Herzegovina), and parts of Europe, have different approaches to this issue in terms of inadequate judicial practice because limitations from the abovementioned article are not clearly defined. Hate speech itself, even if it was determined that it is the subject of a particular case, has no basis in law because it does not exist as a criminal offense. As a result, the cases that eventually end up before the competent courts become the subject of subjectivization. When it comes to hate speech in the virtual world (most often on social networks), where most statements/posts are hidden under the veil of anonymity, the situation is even more complicated because the legal regulations are not clear for cyber violence and similar occurrences are still a novelty.

However, in this manual, we will not be dealing with legal regulations but with hate speech as a phenomenon, its form, and its causes and consequences, especially from the perspective of young people.

Youth and hate speech

When we talk about young people and hate speech among this population, there are specific causes of this, unfortunately, increasingly frequent phenomenon:

1. The need to belong and identify;
2. Absence or low level of awareness of the consequences of one's behavior and the impact of those consequences on society;
3. Specific characteristics of the environment in which young people grow up;
4. Lack of preventive programs.

Bearing in mind that the period of growing up as a process implies a series of psycho-physical changes in young people, the need to belong and find one's identity in the sea of existing identities is strongly present among young people and represents a natural phenomenon. Young people behave more relaxed with peers who have specific characteristics (either physical or psychological) similar to theirs. However, lack of self-confidence, a tendency towards introverted forms of behavior, etc., contribute to the fact that young people often take (either in public or in virtual space) positions opposite to those they represent.

Young people often resort to different forms of behavior to "fit in" more easily in society, at school, at training, or in general among peers. Hate speech certainly belongs to one of them, considering that they often inadequately verbalize their thoughts and attitudes under the pretext of expressing their position on a specific topic/problem/phenomenon.

Parallel to the appearance of hate speech, there is also a low level or complete absence of awareness among young people about the consequences of their behavior, i.e., the scope and impact that such behavior has in the broader community, whether it is a circle of friends, family, school or the wider environment. Because of a lack of information, ignorance, and awareness of how harmful hate speech can be for them and others, young people go on a rampage and express their views on particular persons and events with inflammatory texts, sentences, and/or reckless comments. In this sense, the preventive programs discussed in the following lines can make an exceptional contribution.

Taking into account Bosnia and Herzegovina and the war past that left this country (as well as the entire region) with the label "PROBLEMATIC," it can be safely said that young people still carry a substantial burden of the past. Therefore, if they were to compare themselves with their peers from more democratically developed European countries or further away, they would be in a significantly worse position. Surrounded by different narratives, views on the political situation during and after the war, and an unenviable political, social, and economic image of society, young people in the Western Balkans see the hate speech in some manifestations as almost inevitable. This is mainly present in smaller, rural areas, where there are still clear lines of division between minority and majority populations, with different ethnic and religious/confessional affiliations. In addition, the "contribution" of the school system, which includes different curricula for other entities/cantons, and the study of national groups of subjects, is also unquestionable, all of which contribute to widening the already large gap between young people who come from different ethnic groups.

In this regard, preventive programs are essential in implementing various non-formal (formal) activities with children and young people. Working with children has shown that even in the first years of elementary school education, workshops of an educational and creative nature can be very effectively implemented, with the ultimate goal of preventing the spread of hate speech and adequately encouraging freedom of speech and expression. In this sense, the school plays an important role, not only in the educational but also in the developmental sense. It can undoubtedly help and contribute to reducing the number of cases of hate speech among young people through implementing the abovementioned activities. In addition to the school, the non-governmental sector at the local (even state) level and the close environment of children and young people (parents, friends, relatives, etc.) can also be involved in implementing activities to prevent hate speech.

Of course, the list of causes is much longer, and they can probably be classified into some other groups/subgroups. Indeed, all classifications have in common the consequences that arise from them, and according to one of the classifications, they can be divided into:

1. Emotional;
2. Psychological;
3. Social;
4. Physical.

The emotional consequences can be multiple, from feelings of shame and fear to feelings of not belonging and an identity crisis.

The psychological consequences are manifested in mental health problems, which those who are the target of hate speech can be dealing with as a result.

The social consequences are perhaps the most important or the most difficult to rehabilitate, considering that they do not refer only and exclusively to persons or groups who were the subject of hate speech and therefore resorted to isolation or are socially marginalized. In addition to this, they refer to social cohesion, which is permanently shaken, and to the overall atmosphere in a community/city/state.

The physical consequences are manifested in the fact that hate speech could, in some cases (and it was often the case), escalate into a physical confrontation and even violence, whether by the people who used it or by the people who were affected by the hate speech, as a form of defense.

Hate speech in public space

If a classification of hate speech had to be made according to the place, that is, the space on and in which it is carried out, it could generally be divided into hate speech in public space and hate speech on social networks.

In this sense, hate speech in public, real spaces most often refers to cases of hate speech on:

- political speeches and gatherings;
- religious gatherings;

- public events (commemorations, protests);
- reporting in traditional media;
- drawing graffiti, writing texts with offensive content in public areas.

When we talk about young people, hate speech does not bypass them, as well as other age groups in society, whether they are the ones who direct (act) the hate speech, whether they are the victims, that is, those to whom the hate speech is addressed. In the public space, according to current practice, young people rarely decide to express their views or beliefs using hate speech for a simple reason: they are in a public space. Therefore, the space and circumstances they are exposed to are visible and can be easily identified. Whether it is shouting at a political rally, a protest, or graffiti, an individual or a group of young people could undoubtedly be found or identified more quickly than in the virtual world. According to experts, a school is, unfortunately, a place where young people often encounter hate speech. Most often, these are cases of discrimination in terms of physical appearance, national and/or religious affiliation, material status, etc.

“A frequent form of violence in schools is derogatory speech and hate speech, which is sometimes ignored or not taken seriously enough, and leaves negative consequences for young people’s self-confidence and self-image. (...) A characteristic of school age is that a child’s physical appearance often becomes a starting point for discrimination, insults, and the spread of hate speech among peers.” (Kolašinac, 2021)

The role of the school and the education system, in general, is also emphasized, given that if this negative trend continues, children and young people will not be protected from hate speech anywhere but in their own homes. Unfortunately, taking into account the pace of life and the obligations imposed by modern society, the lack of free time and space for family and conversation, the family circle could become narrow over time and deaf to adolescents’ needs and concerns. There are quite a few cases in which the parents, partly out of ignorance and partly out of negligence, pass on negative behavior patterns to their children. In this regard, educating and empowering parents and including them in preventive programs is an absolute imperative.

Hate speech on social media

In the era of social networks that serve (but also demand) information from users at a galloping speed - among whom young people are still dominant, hate speech has also found its way. What we used to call “modern” social networks (like Facebook and Twitter) today have been replaced by Instagram and TikTok, and the “refreshing” of YouTube as a platform for countless young people who need self-identification to find their place under “The Sun” and the group in which they would feel welcomed. Today, social networks are the most fertile ground for hate speech, where we witness calls for lynching, violence, and protest against individuals or groups almost daily. This happens because most popular networks “offer” practically complete anonymity to their users, leading to a nearly unstoppable wave of published content with different connotations, where hate speech often dominates.

The absence of clear legal regulations and harsh measures to sanction such behavior further complicates the work of all those who want to deal effectively with this problem. What is even more concerning is that young people are not reporting hate speech, and a large number of cases are either not known at all or are discovered in the media; when the situation escalates, it becomes extreme, or the case receives public attention through the media for some other reasons. The prevention and fight against this problem is just as necessary and needed as in the case of hate speech in public space, with the distinction that lies in the fact that, when it comes to social networks, the challenges are piling up, so it is necessary to search for more effective methods.

The prevention and fight against this problem are just as necessary as in the case of hate speech in public spaces, mainly because when it comes to social networks, the challenges are piling up. Hence, it is necessary to search for more effective methods again and again.

Hate speech and the connection with violent extremism

In the available literature and materials, the concept of hate speech is almost inseparable from the idea of violent extremism. Although there is no definition of violent extremism, the term implies “supporting or perpetrating violence against other human beings in favor of political goals(...)

such violence is carried out, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, political or sexual orientation.” (OSCE BH, 2016)

In societies that have developed democratic capacities, violent extremism is also dangerous, but it is significantly lower than in communities where these capacities are weakened.

For example, in a country like Bosnia and Herzegovina, where hate speech is present almost every day, violent extremism represents a great danger and is more likely to occur than in other societies in the region and/or the rest of Europe. This is the case because the country went through war, and suffering, among other causes, was the cause of hate speech, war rhetoric, and calls for violence among the constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unfortunately, this country experienced violent extremism first-hand, which left an indelible mark on the pores of its society, and the consequences are still being dealt with today, almost 30 years after the war.

In this regard, young people are in great danger because they represent a target group for violent extremist groups and radical formations; in addition to the threatened identities of young people, we should also bear in mind the fact that this is a society in which there is an extremely high rate of unemployment and poverty, where socio-economic opportunities for young people are limited, and where, in addition to problems from the past, the population also bears the burden of the present, which in the case of BiH (and countries from the region) is the migrant crisis, who try to reach European countries via the so-called Balkan route.

An additional aggravating circumstance is the fact that in public, among the political representatives, in the media, at school and on social networks, and even in the family circle, young people often receive indirect support for this expression of their views because the democratic foundations are shaken in the entire society. All this makes it more challenging and necessary to act in all fields precisely in such countries. To achieve more effective results, not only Bosnia and Herzegovina but all societies should first seriously deal with hate speech because its prevention almost directly affects the prevention and suppression of violent extremism and radicalism.

Recommendations and conclusions

It is unquestionable that hate speech if we do not continue to fight it as a society, will always find its way to individuals and groups. In this regard, young people are the most vulnerable and the most susceptible.

A lot needs to be done while working on the prevention of hate speech and closely related violent extremism, and a lot needs to be done. First of all:

- The question of hate speech, violent extremism, and their prevention need a holistic approach. Government at the local and state level, civil society, schools and other educational institutions, families, and parents of children and young people, and young people themselves - everyone should get involved and engage the available capacities (knowledge, information, human and other resources) to contribute, to get efficient and effective work results.
- Schools as educational institutions, which also have a developmental role, should include preventive programs (workshops, etc.) in their curricula to more decisively deal with the problem of hate speech and/or extremism among students.
- Support and education of parents must not be an exception. Through the non-governmental sector, youth organizations and/or Centers for Social Work, and relevant ministries, parents of children and youth need to be included in preventive programs and work with children/youth.

The task of every society that is fully democratic, or tends towards democratization, is to deal with the issue of hate speech, with a particular emphasis on young people. The fact that hate speech directly affects reducing and restricting freedom of expression should not be overlooked; therefore, prevention must simultaneously aim at the promotion and recognition of the right to freedom of speech and expression.

The examples of the countries of the Western Balkans, which unfortunately, through turbulent historical events, saw directly what hate speech can lead to, have a special motive and responsi-

bility to act preventively for the entire society, so that the young generations grow up in environments that nurture dialogue, peace, living together with others in harmony, with the guaranteed human rights and dignity of each individual.

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2



Peace education is one of the most powerful tools we can use to prevent hate speech and violent extremism. However, when we talk about peace education, first, we have to define what peace is. Commonly, peace is defined as just the absence of violence, but that is not the only and complete definition. Sometimes we understand peace the same way we define darkness and coldness. Darkness is explained as the absence of light, while coldness is the absence of heat. Following that path, peace is understood as a state without violence. We are saying that violence is the natural state of society and the state of peace is an exception. This explanation isn't in the spirit of peace pedagogy; instead, violence should be viewed as an exception while the state of peace

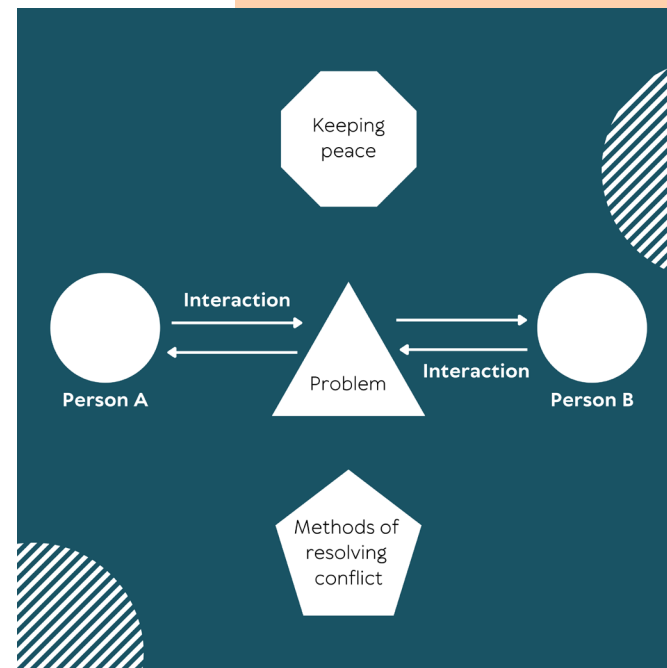
should be viewed as the natural state of society. When speaking about peace, we should consider the context we are viewing it from, whether it be the social, cultural, or individual context in which it can manifest itself. Only then we could try to explain peace. One of the elements of peace is peace pedagogy which is further divided into peace education and peace raising. Castro and Galace (2008, as cited in Seriadi and Ilfiandra, 2019) say that the term peace pedagogy not only refers to conflict and how to solve them, but it also includes the processes in which people overcome differences without causing any conflicts both on an individual or higher level. Peace raising is explained through many topics, which were explained by Čudina-Obradović and Težak (195, as cited in Jindra and Škugor, 2007) and those are: developing a positive self-image and their emotions, developing awareness of others, respecting differences, developing empathy, cooperation, helping others, understanding of conflicts and their resolution without using violence, developing communication skills, conflict mediation, developing awareness of other cultures, etc. Peace education, on the other hand, as defined by UNICEF (1999), is a process in which knowledge, skills, opinions, and values are promoted and are needed to change the way children, youth, and elderly behave regarding the prevention of conflict and violence in an open and structured manner; how to resolve conflicts peacefully, and how to create an environment to promote peace, whether it be on an intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, national or international level.

That preventive role of peace education makes it the most powerful tool, as stated earlier, in preventing hate speech and violent extremism. Delgado and Stefančić (1995, as cited by Paz, Diaz, and Delgado, 2020) have defined hate speech as a conscious and willful public statement intended to denigrate a group of people. Mroz (2009, as cited by Nasser-Eddine et al., 2011) defines violent extremism as violence in the absence of reason, or rather the belief that committing an act of violence will produce benefits that outweigh the cost of human life. Now that we understand both terms, we can easily conclude that peace education's role is preventing both hate speech and violent extremism. Regarding that, the next and most important question is how and in what way we could use peace education to prevent both hate speech and violent extremism. The answer to that question is hidden in the ways how we cope with conflicts. To explain this, we will present the three most common ways people deal with conflict.

The Prevention of Hate Speech and Violent Extremism through Peace Education

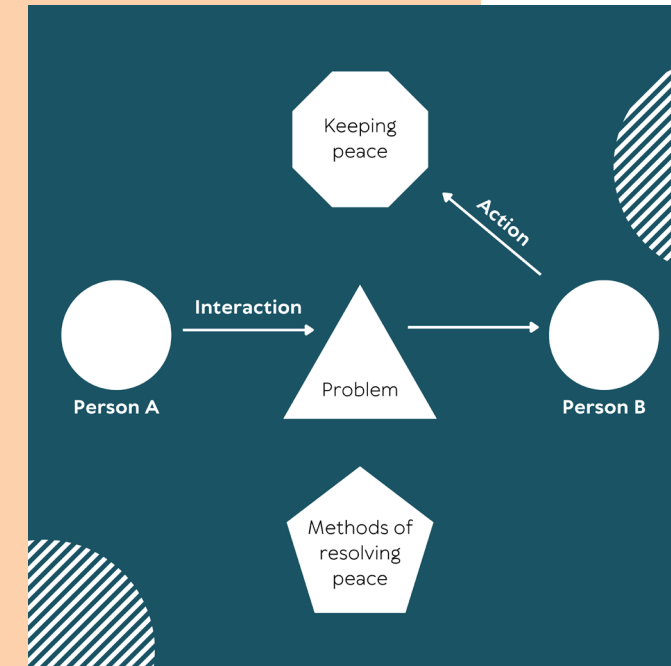
Azra Hodžić

The first picture (Picture 1.) represents a conflict interaction in which both actors do not know how to resolve the conflict without seeing the other through the problem. It is essential to point out that during this interaction, none of the actors are reaching out toward keeping the peace nor to the methods of resolving conflict. If this situation continues without resolutions, it is most likely that the conflict will escalate into some form of violence. Continuing this conflict, Actor A or Actor B can form some sort of a negative opinion. In that case, the door to hate speech is open; if the conflict escalates to a higher level (group or national), the possibility of hate crimes and violent extremism increases.



Picture 1. Conflict interaction

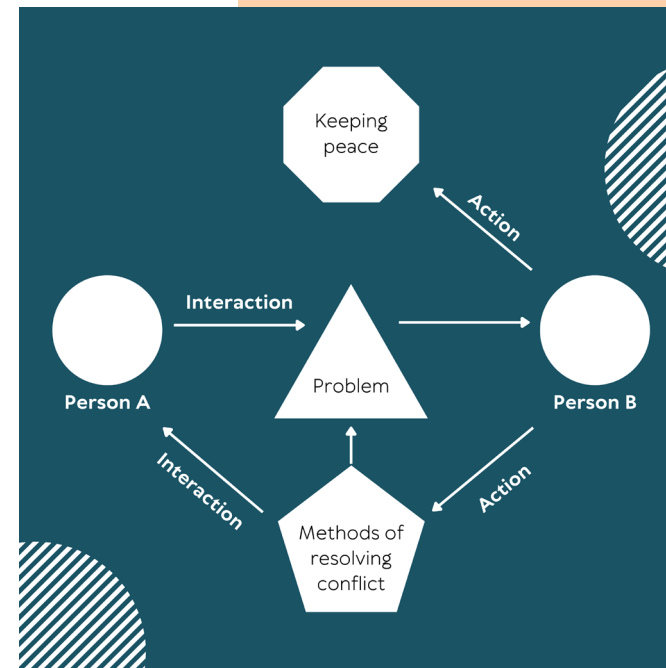
The second picture (Picture 2.) represents an interaction with a peacekeeper. Peacekeepers are those who like to bury the conflict to keep the peace or an illusion of it. If a peacekeeper finds themselves in a situation where Actor A is viewing them through the problem, Actor B will keep the peace. In this situation, the conflict is not resolved; it has just taken another form which will lead to the same conflict over again. It is essential to point out that this way of dealing with conflict is not an effective way of preventing hate speech; it will just stop it for a short period.



Picture 2. Peacekeeper interaction

In our third and final picture (Picture 3), we will present an interaction in which Actor B is a peacebuilder. Peacebuilders cope with problems effectively because they know how to resolve conflict while maintaining peace. To understand how to resolve a conflict, it is first needed to gather knowledge, skills, and methods they will use. In the picture, you can see that Actor A looks at Actor B through the problem, but Actor B will not reciprocate. Also, Actor B will not only run towards keeping the peace. They will face the conflict, find methods they will use, and act upon the problem. Through these methods, they will work on Person A, thereby solving the problem and conflict that has arisen. While doing all this, they will preserve peace within that interpersonal relationship. If a conflict situation is approached in this way, we work to prevent the occurrence of hate speech. The goal, in this case, is not to stop hate speech but to stop the possibility of its occurrence. Understandably, this way of dealing with conflict requires more time, energy, will, knowledge and skill to be successful.

Picture 3. Peacebuilder Interaction



The key to achieving this way of dealing with conflict, shown in the last picture, is one of the main tasks of peace education. If the educational system successfully realizes the tasks of peace education, we will be able to talk more about the prevention of hate speech and violent extremism than about their suppression. There are many other ways to prevent hate speech and violent extremism. Authors Stephens et al. (2019) state the following methods of prevention:

- The resilient individual;
- Cognitive resources;
- Developing character traits (like empathy);
- Promoting and strengthening values;
- Creating space to explore own identity;
- Creating space to explore other identities;
- Developing the culture of dialogue;
- Community engagement;
- Forming a space for discussion.

There are many ways to prevent hate speech and violent extremism. Most of these methods of prevention are hidden in peace education. The way we deal with conflict and other prevention methods can have a lot of impact on people around us. Therefore, one of the main tasks of peace education should be prevention, along with conducting research into how to prevent it in a better way. Hate speech is one of the first forms of violence, and if we allow it to develop further, we can put ourselves in situations of more dangerous forms of violence. This is precisely why peace education is essential because it is the first and most important form of prevention, and more work and effort must be invested in its development.

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3



Agreeing on the definition of mental health is quite challenging. Still, to understand this topic, we can use the definition of the World Health Organization, according which mental health is “a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his potential, can cope with normal life stresses, can work productively and fruitfully and can contribute to his community.”

Mental health is the foundation for well-being and efficient functioning for both the individual and the community. It can be concluded from this that people with poorer mental health will be unhealthy for themselves and their community, which in the extreme case can lead to the use of hate speech and violent extremism.

Risk factors leading to risky behaviors in the context of violent extremism and hate speech

Have you ever wondered how some people use hate speech and become violent extremists while others do not? What makes these people different? Why are some people more susceptible than others?

The answers to these questions can be found in the risk factors that can lead to risky behaviors in the context of violent extremism and hate speech (Adnan K., Zorić M., et al., 2019). Those factors can be divided into three categories:

- personal;
- family;
- social.

Personal factors (personality characteristics)

Personal factors refer to the characteristics an individual possesses that distinguishes him from others. These can be age, gender, seclusion, low self-esteem, the need for self-affirmation, and unquestioning obedience. Young people are the main target for recruitment and mobilization for extremist organizations. Regardless of country, religion, social background, or level of education, young people are the social group that is most vulnerable in the context of violent extremism. Psychologists attribute this vulnerability to several factors, including, but not limited to, youth's search for identity, a sense of meaning, community, purpose, recognition, and belonging. Their natural impulsiveness and willingness to take more significant risks can make them more susceptible to recruitment and mobilization by extremist organizations. Furthermore, people who are withdrawn and have low self-esteem will be more inclined to join a group where they feel accepted and equal to other members, which is what violent extremist groups generally provide to their members. Therefore, a vulnerable individual needs to belong to someone or something, a desire for a certain social status, he/she is attracted by the possibility of action, making changes, and obtaining a material reward.

The importance of mental health in understanding and preventing hate speech and violent extremism

Berina Bulatović

Family factors (influence of previous life experience)

Each of us happened to experience some for us stressful life periods that led us to changes in attitudes and behavior. They mainly were related to significant life events such as employment, losing a job, getting married, having children, serious illnesses, the sudden death of a family member, and the presence of various forms of violence within the family. In addition, there is another factor that is characteristic of the post-conflict B&H society, which is the transfer of one's view of past events to younger generations. Namely, it is not unusual for the family to convey their perception of the war to the younger ones as a story with many vivid details or, at the other extreme, to avoid such a topic altogether.

Who do you think would be more susceptible to using hate speech and joining violent-extremist groups, a person whose parents objectively conveyed the facts that happened during the war in the 90s or a person who grew up in an environment of people who recount those events very subjectively?

Social factors

Social factors also play an essential role in the emergence and spread of violent extremism and hate speech. They refer to changes in the social, economic, and political sense that society is going through. This can include a decline in living standards, poverty, civil wars, or changes in the economic and political system as a whole. The result of such changes is an increased unemployment rate, people feel alienated and hopeless, and they have a strong sense of social injustice and betrayal by the state. When people go through such a period in their lives, their self-esteem decreases, their level of critical thinking decreases, and they are much more susceptible to making decisions that they would not otherwise make, such as joining an extremist group in exchange for group affiliation, financial security, social position, etc. Groups can also promise greater ideals than material ones - such as freedom and the future. Groups are perceived as a place where peo-

ple genuinely belong and where they can adequately complete the purpose of their existence. Violent extremists very often manage to manipulate target groups when they offer an additional negative story about the state and society from which they already feel alienated and place positive narratives about the values of those already involved in acts of violence and terror (Mušić, 2016).

It is essential to point out that these factors never act in isolation. Still, the joint action of several factors takes place, and factors from one category can influence factors from another category. As seen in the example above, an increased unemployment rate (a social factor) can lower people's self-esteem (a personal factor).

Namely, it is not possible to create a profile of a person who is susceptible to violent extremism, nor about any single dominant risk factor; however, some authors claim that supporting radical ideas and violent extremism correlates with: younger people, primarily males; to those who believe that "their ideology" or "purpose" is in danger; the belief that one religion or ideology is currently in trouble in the world and the belief that one religion or ideology deserves to have a more significant role in the world (Adnan K., Zorić M., et al., 2019).

Consequences of hate speech

There are several different divisions regarding the consequences of hate speech on an individual. One division was created by Smolla (1990, according to Muheljić and Drače, 2019), who divided the potential damage caused by hate speech into three categories:

- consequences of physical nature: damage directly related to a person or material property - example: speech that incites a person or a group of people to commit criminal acts such as hitting, pushing, stoning, breaking property, etc. Hate speech can also initiate violence against the person who utters it if it is perceived as an insult or a threat. In other words, the victim or bystander may become violent towards the abuser:

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- consequences concerning relations in society - hate speech can have a substantial impact on social relations, professional cooperation, and even on relations between states;
- reactive damage caused by emotional and intellectual reactions to the content of the speech. Such reactions can occur on an individual but also on a collective level.

In the research conducted by Leets and Giles (1997, according to Muheljić and Drače, 2019), the main question was how much people consider hate speech to be harmful and how they react to it on an affective, cognitive, and behavioral level. Participants were shown extreme cases of hate speech (swearing, insults, and threats) and milder cases (criticism and stereotypical remarks). After that, they measured the harmfulness of hate speech by asking respondents what they would say about how much psychological and emotional stress the victims of that hate speech experienced. It was shown that the participants evaluated the extreme form of hate speech as more stressful than milder. Then, participants who identify with the victims of hate speech, who belong to one of those groups against whom hate speech was perpetrated, asked for harsher punishments for its propagation. But what is very important is that something happened that the researchers did not foresee - the majority group members estimated that in extreme hate speech, the victim would suffer more damage than the members of the minority group assessed.

Hate speech has significant consequences for both physical and psychological health. People who experience some form of racial discrimination and consider it very stressful more often have headaches, dizziness, and often feel lonely (Muheljić and Drače, 2019).

The research conducted by Garbán, Iribarren, and Noriega (2012, Muheljić and Drače, 2019) showed that exposure to hate speech could harm people's mental and physical health. In accordance with expectations, exposure to hate speech led to a significant increase in self-reports of anxiety and the level of cortisol (stress hormone), and a positive correlation was also obtained between the level of anxiety and the level of cortisol in saliva, i.e., the higher the level of anxiety, the higher cortisol level in saliva.

The short-term and long-term consequences of exposure to hate speech content were examined. The most common short-term consequences reported by victims were of an emotional nature (the presence of negative emotions such as anger and sadness). The long-term repercussions included changes in attitudes towards those who promote this form of discrimination, so minorities change their views towards the majority.

Actors and their role in preventing violent extremism

Preventing hate speech and violent extremism requires the involvement of the whole society, and critical actors who can play an essential role in this will be mentioned here. That is:

- family;
- formal education;
- non-formal education.

The role of the family in the context of violent extremism can be two-fold; on the one hand, it can support its members in conducting violent extremism, while on the other hand, it can be crucial in its prevention. As part of the research carried out by the OSCE (2018), several cases were mentioned in which the family was crucial in the prevention of violent extremism, such as the case of a young man from B&H who, after calling his mother in which, he asked for permission to go to war, returned in B&H because the family intervened and managed to dissuade him from going to Syria. It is the family that can notice any changes in children, with an emphasis on early warning signs of radicalization (Buzar, 2018).

Formal education is crucial, considering that children and young people spend a lot of time in educational institutions and at home. Therefore, teachers and parents may be the first to notice signs of radical violent behavior (Mušić, 2016). Documents that were created at the world level, such as the UN General Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and the UN Security Council

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and Resolution 2178, consider that education about violent extremism and radicalism can (UNESCO, 2016, according to Mušić 2016):

- help young people develop communication and interpersonal skills necessary for dialogue, disagreement with others, and learning a peaceful approach to change;
- help students develop critical thinking to investigate claims, verify rumors and questions, and question the legitimacy and justification of extremist beliefs;
- help students develop resistance to extremist narratives, as well as acquire the social-emotional skills they need to overcome their doubts and contribute constructively to society without resorting to violence;
- encourage critical informing of citizens to engage in peaceful collective social actions constructively.

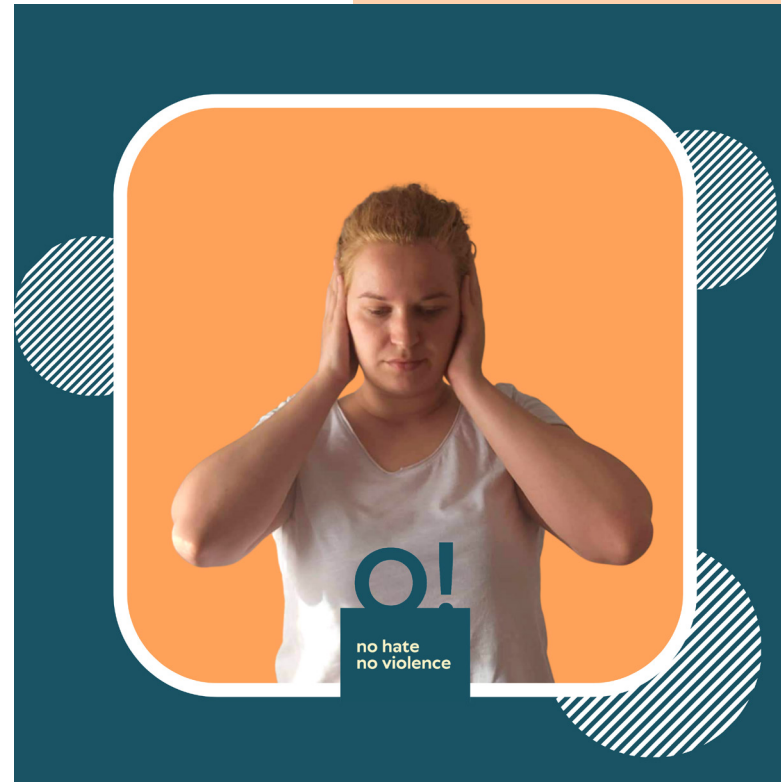
Also, the “Guide to Preventing Violent Extremism for Teachers” issued by UNESCO in 2016 encourages discussions with students about extremism at the local level, rather than at the global and European level, as such discussion will help students understand the connection between local and international challenges, understanding the real risks and consequences of violent extremism, and will show young people that they can act differently if they make the right decision within their current context.

Non-formal education is very important, especially because today there is an increase in the number of young people involved in the work of various non-governmental organizations and the numerous educations they organize. Youth workers have very close and frequent contact with volunteers and activists, who often trust them more than their schools’ teachers. Therefore, it provides a suitable ground for early recognition of signs of radicalization and violent extremism, the development of communication and interpersonal skills, and critical thinking.

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Media pluralism does not only mean the existence of several different forms of media reporting, but in its essence, it implies the existence of media and media organizations acting from different positions or opinions. Media pluralism is a prerequisite for all political systems based on the rule of Law and citizen participation. It also requires reporting that will protect every individual's rights, dignity, and reputation. The basic role of the media is to protect the public interest of citizens, regardless of their ethnic, racial, or national identity, as well as gender identity and sexual orientation. Also, according to many theorists, free media is considered one of the four pillars of democracy. It is therefore clear that this most important role of the media must be clearly sepa-

rated from any political or other particular influence, which is insisted on by the codes of journalists both in the world and in the region of the former Yugoslavia, stating that a journalist answers only to his/her audience, and never to external factors. The Code of Journalists of Serbia explicitly states: "A journalist is, above all, responsible to his readers, listeners, and viewers. This responsibility must not be subordinated to the interests of others, especially the interests of publishers, the government, and other state authorities. A journalist must stand up to anyone who violates human rights or advocates any discrimination, hate speech and incitement to violence" (Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia and Journalists' Association of Serbia, 2015).

What is worrying is when the government starts controlling the media, regardless of whether they are public media services, commercial media, or civil society media. When we talk about the freedom of the media in Serbia and if the government supports destructive narratives, it is extremely important to note that the current president of Serbia, who was Minister of Public Information at the end of the nineties, passed the strictest Law on Public Information in 1998, about which Cenzolovka states: "... (it) served the former authorities to brutally deal with the media and journalists, punishing them with draconian fines, confiscating editorial and personal property" (Spaić, 2020), which established a system of repression of dissenters in a very sensitive socio-political period in Serbia. Today, according to the findings of the Reporters Without Borders and their media freedom index, Serbia is in 79th place, and journalists in this country are: "often exposed to political attacks, which are instigated by members of the ruling elite, and which are instigated by certain national TV networks" (Reporters without Borders, 2021). Today, in the time of digital transformation of the media, there are almost an infinite number of sources of information, as well as space for social and political participation of citizens in the media space, which consequently creates fertile ground for hate speech, violent extremism, as well as other destructive narratives.

Hate speech directed towards media workers

In Serbia, it can certainly be said that journalists are often the target of hate speech, threats, etc., and these are often journalists who do not support the current regime and are unbiased. The Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia collected data on as many as 54 attacks on journalists during 2021, including physical attacks, threats of death and physical safety, verbal threats, pressure, and harassment of journalist (Djurić, 2021). These and many other examples indicate the existence of a hostile atmosphere regarding the profession, which further reveals the presence of a deeply rooted problem of political influence on the media. For example, N1 Serbia is often the target of inappropriate behavior by authorities and even the president. The portal N1 Serbia wrote, after a question regarding the possible indictment for war crimes in Croatia against him, President Vučić, according to N1: “accused N1 that we do not care about Serbian children” (Independent Journalists’ Association of Vojvodina, 2020). Such a move may result in further targeting of this and other similar media as “unsuitable,” “treasonous,” and such like, and may lead to more significant mobilization of citizens or other social factors against this media, thereby jeopardizing the safety of journalists, as well as possibility of their reporting.

At the end of 2020, hate graffiti was painted on the building of the editor of the Vojvodina Research and Analytical Centre VOICE and program director of the Independent Journalists’ Association of Vojvodina (IJAV), Dinko Gruhonjić. The announcement of IJAV states: “At the entrance to the building, messages such as “Ustasha cunt, this is not your city or country” and “Smells of a stable” are written, along with the Celtic cross and swastika, which represent Nazi symbols, and written “Ratko Mladić - Serbian hero.” This act directly threatened the safety of Gruhonjić and his family, and he was marked as a legitimate target” (Independent Journalists’ Association of Vojvodina, 2020). Let us be reminded that only a few years before that, in the daily newspaper Informer, Dinko Gruhonjić was labeled a “foreign mercenary”, and the pejorative nickname Sabahudin was added to his name (Unsigned author, 2016), due to his disagreement with the official policy of Serbia when it comes to wars in former Yugoslavia, which can lead to physical and digital attacks

on this journalist because the media targeted him because of his journalistic work, his opinion, but also on a national basis. This and many other examples clearly indicate how messages of hate and nationalism distributed through the media can mobilize certain social groups that will take specific steps to threaten the safety of an individual, in this case, a journalist.

Hate speech toward migrant population

In recent years, Serbian media have extensively covered the migrant issue. While the government in Serbia approaches this topic with relative restraint, many political parties, as well as the media, make it clear that their position is that migrants are not welcome in Serbia. In the IJAV publication “Reporting on migrants: between manipulation and ethics,” it is stated that: “The environment in which this topic is discussed is very unfavorable, accompanied by conspiracy theories, fake news, and xenophobia. Right-wing parties such as “Dveri” and “Dosta je bilo” make unsubstantiated claims about the mass settlement of migrants, as well as their supposed terrorist and extremist intentions, and base their offline and online campaigns on anti-migrant rhetoric” (Independent Journalists’ Association of Vojvodina., 2020). Namely, in a video published on the YouTube channel of the Serbian Movement Dveri, its president Boško Obradović expressed his opinion on the arrival of migrants and its alleged effect on the demographic structure in Serbia by mixing liquids of different colors, dark and light, in a glass (Serbian Movement Dveri, 2020). After that, the Commissioner for Protection of Equality Brankica Janković, in a warning about the published video, pointed out: “...the leader of the Dveri Boško Obradović incites fear and creates a hostile environment towards migrants and people of different skin color and ethnic origin” (Commissioner for Protection of Equality, 2020). This is just one example of how politicians use non-traditional forms of media to spread messages of intolerance that can lead to violence against, in this case, the migrant population in Serbia.

It is essential to underline that politicians bear a great deal of responsibility because the platform from which they address voters is extensive, in traditional or new media. They have a significant in-

fluence on public opinion in a country. Such narratives are also present on social media networks, where like-minded people in closed groups exchange media content of anti-immigrant nature, characterising them as rapists, abusers and thieves, spreading animosity and hatred towards this group in an even more intimate atmosphere, which can lead to violence against migrants. When we specifically talk about the influence of the media on the spread of hatred towards migrants, a significant problem is the lack of respect of the right to the presumption of innocence, i.e. the journalist's obligation to protect the identity and privacy of both the victim and the perpetrator of the crime, which is one of the fundamental principles of the codes of journalists around the world, including the Code of Journalists of Serbia. Namely, the media do not hesitate to accuse migrants of crimes for which the perpetrator has not yet been identified, thus deepening hatred on religious, national, and religious grounds.

Hate speech toward the LGBTQ+ population

Homophobia and intolerance towards the LGBTQ+ population is undoubtedly something that is deeply rooted in the Serbian, very patriarchal society, which makes it clear where those whose lives do not fit into the heteronormative, traditional society social ladder belong. What is worrying is how the media, directly or indirectly, promotes destructive narratives about this population. Namely, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality found that Vojislav Šešelj, the president of the Serbian Radical Party and convicted before the International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia, violated the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination by appearing on TV Pink by declaring that homosexuality is a deviation of sexual behavior and should be called a disease (Commissioner for Protection of Equality, 2021). It is reasonable to expect that such statements can be a reason for the spread of hatred and violence towards members of the LGBTQ+ community because this politician has a long-standing political platform and a significant electorate. One of the big problems with this incident on TV Pink is the above-mentioned responsibility of the media to report in the public interest, and it is pretty clear that the responsibility ought to be borne by the media with a national frequency due to the extensive distribution of their content.

The question arises as to which socio-political agenda dictates or approves the spread of such or similar narratives in the media service with a national frequency and whether the government indirectly or directly supports it in Serbia, which is very favorable to media outlets such as TV Pink, even though they broadcast very problematic content in their programs. Also, given that such televisions are given a national frequency, it can be interpreted that discriminatory content, to a lesser or greater extent, is welcome.

Conclusion

The mass media certainly have moral and legal responsibility towards their audience, precisely to inform, educate and entertain citizens in accordance with the public interest and human rights of each community member. The media is an essential extension and construct of political and social reality, without which reality as such would not even exist. To understand our role, regardless of where we come from, we must understand that every person, every day, is a carrier of a particular message, so in its essence, he/she is a medium that constructs the reality around themselves. Therefore, it is necessary to accept that we are all parts of the mass media system and are obliged to protect the integrity and dignity of all of us, regardless of our individual identities. What can be easily seen from the efforts of certain media to distribute discriminatory content is an attempt to avoid topics crucial for a society's social, political, or economic stability by targeting a certain sensitive group, which diverts attention from important national or world issues. Every media and public figure must take more responsibility for their public actions, especially when they threaten a person or group based on their identity, because hate speech and the violence it can produce is more far-reaching when promoted by public figures or media with a built-up fan base. State institutions must take concrete steps to combat hate speech and violent extremism, not only by issuing warnings but by prosecuting such cases to set a standard for preventing such destructive behavior. In this way, society will be made aware that the freedom of the individual ends where the freedom of others begins and that no part of the system has the right to call for the suppression of the human rights of a group. It is necessary to underline that no individual should be a

“bystander,” an observer of violent behavior or violent rhetoric in society; each person is responsible for a part of the system in which he/she lives and can take measures to protect certain groups or individuals from extremist behavior and the machinery that stands from that in every society.

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5



International Non-Governmental Organizations hold a prominent position and vast responsibility in combatting hate speech and violent extremism. Their presence on the global scene, outreach, and influence offer many opportunities to actively work on preventing and suppressing hate speech.

In discussing the role of International Non-Governmental Organizations in preventing hate speech and violent extremism and active fight to suppress and eliminate such phenomena, we must understand their position, responsibility, and authority in the process. We will examine the

role of INGOs in the fight against violent extremism and hate speech through the example of the United Religions Initiative.

Understanding International Non-Governmental Organizations

International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are not-for-profit voluntary associations operating at the international, transnational, or global level, with members or participants from many countries. This definition clearly states the character of INGOs as global organizations that gather individuals, informal groups, and organizations crossing geographical borders and working in many different contexts. According to The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) INGO is defined as “any organization which is not established by inter-governmental agreement” (Resolution 288 (X) 27 February 1950), “including organizations which accept members designated by government authorities, provided that such membership does not interfere with the free expression of views of the organizations” (Resolution 1296 (XLV) of 25 June 1968).

INGOs, just like local organizations, deal with a wide variety of activities across virtually all social domains, including humanitarian work and relief, protection of human rights, environmental work, etc. Different causes may inspire international and local NGOs’ formation. For the sake of this publication and its purpose, it is essential to emphasize the existence of faith-based and faith-inspired organizations.

INGOs’ goals and activities are neither economic nor political in the usual sense. Instead, they are primarily concerned with information, communication, and practical projects to organize global domains or global effect change, and most INGOs focus on the promotion of public goods and the welfare of others (Boli and Thomas 1999). Through their activities and projects, they are trying to provide synchronized efforts worldwide that will achieve the organization’s goals. Even though specific criteria are needed to define an international organization, they are far from being uniformed. Their size, field of work, and level of sophistication differentiate them.

The role of INGOs - prevention and fight against hate speech and violent extremism

Samira Baručija-Homoraš

United Religions Initiative - Largest Interfaith Peacebuilding Network Against Hate Speech and Violent Extremism

We, people of diverse religions, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions throughout the world, come together to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence, and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings. — Excerpt from the Preamble of URI's Charter

With these profound words, the United Religions Initiative was founded in 2000. Over the past 22 years, URI has grown into the largest grassroots interfaith organization in the world that includes over 1,000 Cooperation Circles (member groups) in more than 100 countries. URI is organized into eight regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and North Africa, North America, Southeast Asia and the Pacific, and Multiregion. United Religions Initiative (URI) is a global interfaith network that promotes peace and justice by engaging people at the grassroots level to bridge religious and cultural differences and work together for the good of their communities and the world. The United Religions Initiative (URI) aims to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, end religiously-motivated violence, and create cultures of peace, justice, and healing for the Earth and all living beings.

In understanding URI, its values, and core principles, it is necessary to understand the center of URI: Cooperation Circles. So what are the Cooperation Circles and what is their significance in URI? URI has a network of member groups. These grassroots groups, called Cooperation Circles (CCs), are the foundational unit, the center and the life of URI. Self-governing and self-funding, they bring people of all beliefs together to address the most pressing issues facing their communities, building bridges of compassion and understanding between people of different religious and cultural traditions. Working together, groups of URI members from diverse belief traditions identify and address pressing problems with grassroots ingenuity. Projects and programs undertaken by CCs serve one or more of 14 Action Areas, including the Environment, Health & Social

Services, Human Rights, Indigenous Peoples, Peacebuilding, Women, and Youth. Cooperation Circles range from large interfaith organizations tackling violent extremism to small groups of neighbors getting together to support a local cause. They can build constructive relationships with others by coming together from our different backgrounds and being grounded personally and spiritually. Once connections are formed, there is space for sharing skills and ideas and helping and inspiring one another.

INGOs Response to Hate Speech and Violent Extremism

Being a part of an INGO, belonging to a network means a wide range of different things for different groups. Cooperation Circles of URI experience connections across the world and be supported in their work. They are able to share their skills, reach out for help where needed, and bring their stories and experiences to a global community. The power of relationship-building and honoring the collective desire for peace and justice makes the Cooperation Circles model so effective.

To bring the philosophical framework of URI into perspective and give it an actionable dimension in the fight against hate speech and violent extremism, we need to discuss a few practical examples of the resistance and resilience of interfaith work provinces. All of the benefits one network offers can be used for joint thought and action for any challenges and opportunities we face.

How does a grassroots peacebuilding organization connect to the global work of an INGO?

Small or big, grassroots organizations are important in the change we want and need to see in our local communities. The work happening in local communities is what brings about the most significant change. What might help and support the work in local communities is networking, recognition, visibility and global outreach.

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Networking is the most significant benefit of being a part of URI. Cooperation Circles often seek partners from the Network for their local and global initiatives. Being a part of such a vast Network provide opportunities to connect with like-minded organizations and use those connections to expand your work, invite others to join you, or the opportunity for you to join others' initiatives. When seeking relationships, it is only expected that we rely on all the things that bring us closer. Many groups worldwide find common ground and inspiration in their religious, spiritual expressions and indigenous traditions. From their own sources, they take the needed energy for joint work with others who differ from them in many ways. Prayers, co-existence, and collective action are some of the many forms of interfaith collaboration that are used effectively to suppress and prevent hate speech and violent extremism. The Network is there to amplify the voices and invite others to join the cause.

Network invites us to organize encounters that will ensure space to get to know other faiths and cultures and build our resilience to hate and speech that promotes it. The more we understand and interact with others, the less likely we are to be guided by our prejudice and stereotypes. With all that is being done to combat hate speech, we are actively working on preventing violent extremism. Interfaith collaboration allows us to create statements and do actions together, write charters and declarations, and appeal to people's faith and goodness.

Groups from the network form partnerships that result in great collaborations locally and globally. While working together, grassroots groups find ways, with the support of URI, to bridge many barriers, such as language, geography, access to technology, etc.

Much of the hate speech we are facing in our time and extremism that ailes our communities are grounded in a rogue interpretation of various religious and spiritual expressions. This is why interfaith collaboration is not just a good approach but an imperative in fighting against the phenomena damaging our communities.

Interfaith work done by Cooperation Circles is both response and prevention to hate speech and violent extremism. Online and offline activities designed to raise awareness, make connections, and increase understanding and collaboration are seen as prevention, while transformative, compassionate, and healing efforts come as a natural response to the community in need. This is where INGOs such as URI use the opportunity to create synchronized efforts to support the fight against hate speech and create alternatives to the destructive language and behavior resulting in violent extremism. Exposure to different contexts and challenges increases our sensibilities and compassion and helps us to learn lessons from the experiences of others. A challenge that is facing a community from other parts of the world might seem too distant, still, experience shows that issues do not stay contained within the borders of a country or are not translated into other languages. It is an opportunity for growth and a better understanding of events happening everywhere.

One great example of a collaboration that continues to impact many years after its launch is 1000Kalema, meaning 1000 words, that continues to enlighten, educate and inspire. URI's Cooperation Circles were invited to share photographs that encompass interfaith and peacemaking, responding to the needs of their communities, sacred spaces, moments of inspiration, poignancy, or epiphany, faith, respect, and service. 1000Kalema gathered people from many different backgrounds working at the grassroots level to solve issues burdening their communities. Photographs that were submitted for the competition and the campaign showcased what interfaith means for different people, how important it is, and how much interest the global community has for hearing stories from the grassroots. Photographs helped to elevate everyday stories from the lives of people who do and live interfaith. Stories from the photographs started meaningful conversations about what challenges people doing interfaith work had to overcome, and how vital an interfaith approach is for their communities because it addresses many of the issues with which they struggle, including hate, lack of tolerance, and extremism. The exhibition of all the photographs that were submitted traveled around the world and were presented in different interfaith venues, telling the stories of URI's Cooperation Circles and the impact of their interfaith

The role of INGOs - prevention and fight against hate speech and violent extremism

work locally and globally. Besides the impact this initiative had on the wider community, it created a long-lasting impact on the team that worked on the project together and a partnership that continued over the years. This is an example of how to use arts in combating hate speech and violent extremism.

Another good example is the ALTerHate campaign done in collaboration between three Cooperation Circles from different countries. While working together, CCs of URI, led by Youth for Peace from Bosnia and Herzegovina, managed to bridge the barriers of language and implement a well-followed and impactful campaign on social media, that focused on prevention, adequate response, creating an alternative narrative as a way to fight religiously motivated hate speech. The campaign was followed all over the world, and people from many different countries took participation and action during the campaign. What an INGO can do to support such grassroots effort is to bring visibility, recommend partners, support the groups working on the project with capacity building, etc.

URI Regions and Cooperation Circles design specific activities to address the existence of violent extremism in their part of the world. URI's commitment to ending violent extremism and religiously motivated violence is a part of the global framework, but the strategies for addressing what happened in the local communities need to be designed and implemented by people on the ground. In some parts of the Network, workshops created to empower vulnerable groups are implemented; in other parts of the world, it is vital to work with religious leaders. Hearing the voices from the grassroots and doing what is needed in their part of the world is the strategic approach to addressing the violent extremism of URI.

Apart from the initiatives coming from URI, it is important to mention those coming from the largest INGO in the world. What helps spread awareness about the importance of interfaith action against hate speech and violent extremism is the observance of the international days recognized by the United Nations. The UN General Assembly highlighted global concerns over the exis-

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tence of hate speech which is why they adopted a Resolution that recognizes the need to fight all forms of harmful speech and discrimination and invites all relevant stakeholders to increase their efforts in addressing this phenomenon. The Resolution proclaimed 18 June as the International Day for Countering Hate Speech, which was marked for the first time in 2022.

With this Resolution, and with many other initiatives, the UN established itself as one of the most relevant actors in the fight against hate speech and violent extremism. Through its agencies and support for the grassroots, Member States, the UN creates much-needed synergy in resistance and resilience building in our communities. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres launched the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. As stated in the strategy, we have to recognize that over the past 75 years, hate speech has been a precursor to extremism worldwide.

“Hatred is a danger to everyone – and so fighting it must be a job for everyone.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres

In addition to the Plan to fight hate speech, UN Secretary-General launched the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The Plan emphasizes the importance of appropriate action against violent extremism and that violent extremism undermines peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development. The Plan acknowledges that violent extremism does not arise as an isolated scenario and how narratives, actual or perceived injustice, promised empowerment, and the sweeping change affects its spread. (Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism, January 2016)

Observance of another International day ties together the fight against hate speech and violent extremism with interfaith action. Golden Rule Day, proclaimed in 2007 by the UN, invites us to “Treat others and the planet as you would like to be treated.” This principle can be found in many religions, faith, and indigenous traditions, and it calls us to do good to others as we would like to

be done to us. It is a powerful call that invites us to think before acting, to employ our empathy and compassion in dealing with other beings and the planet. This formulation exists in many different traditions, and here are some of them:

Islam

“None of you believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself.”
(An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith 13)

Christianity

“Do to others what you want them to do to you.”
(Matthew 7:21)

Judaism

***“That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow.
That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary.”***
(Talmud, Shabbat 31a)

Buddhism

“Do not hurt others in ways you yourself would find hurtful.”
(Udanavarga 5:18)

Hinduism

***“This is the sum of duty: do nothing to others that would cause you pain
if done to you.”***
(Mahabharata 5:117)

Conclusion

International Non-Governmental Organizations hold a prominent position in the fight against hate speech and violent extremism. With that prominent position comes responsibility for leading the way, creating opportunities for encounters and collaborations with different actors in the fight against two phenomena tearing up many communities worldwide.

The examples of the United Nations and United Religions Initiative show the possibilities for INGOs to be involved in a proactive approach to eliminating hate speech and violent extremism. INGOs have the capacity to create global and local partnerships, design strategies for addressing any issue facing local and global communities, and build bridges where they are needed to secure successful grassroots engagement. In this article, two INGOs were mentioned, but there are many more that do great work around the world. I hope this article inspires you to explore the possibilities of global engagement in addressing hate speech and violent extremism.

It is essential to mention UN resolutions relevant to the conversation about hate speech and violent extremism. Grassroots can use the Resolution suitable for the work they do to advocate and push for changes that are needed from the state level in the country or countries where they operate. UN’s most significant role is to influence the top-down change, using its resolutions to inform the change that the Member States need to implement for their constituents. Their work is supportive to what is happening in our local communities, offering us the framework of the possibilities for solving specific issues we face. Even when the Member States are not working on implementing a resolution they voted for, the local community can advocate and lobby, grassroots organizing, and all other democratic mechanisms to influence the government to start implementing the Resolution in question. Through its agencies, the UN offers support to local communities to implement projects and initiatives that will guarantee results aimed by UNs resolutions and agendas.

The role of INGOs - prevention and fight against hate speech and violent extremism

There are many approaches to dealing with the issues of hate speech and violent extremism. One prominently spoken about in this article is interfaith collaboration. Interfaith collaboration presents itself in many different ways. People come together from a different faith, religious and indigenous traditions to work together, speak about their faith, speak about their common problems, and pray together, all to achieve peace for all. Not any kind of peace, positive peace. Local and global organizations, governments, private sector all have roles to play in preventing hate speech and violent extremism, but so do you and me. Should that be Our Imperative?

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6

**Introduction to hate speech**

Duration: 90 minutes

Human resources: 1-2 facilitators

Goals:

After the workshop, participants will be able to:

- describe hate speech, what it encompasses and what it does not;
- recognize hate speech both offline and online;
- raise awareness about the existence and dangers of hate speech.

Methodology:

discussion, silent floor technique, brainstorming, barometer (scales)

Materials:

A4 paper, laptop, beamer, markers, paper tape, flipchart, sticky notes, Mentimeter, Padlet, Google Jamboard, Slido, Zoom

Instructions:

1. The workshop should start with an energizer or an icebreaker to help participants relax. Some of the energizers can be found [here](#). (10 min)
(Online option: a list of online energizers can be found [here](#).)
2. Short brainstorming on the words “hate speech”. Participants will be given three sticky notes, write their associations, and put them on a flipchart. Another possibility is to use Mentimeter or Slido and create a Word cloud of their associations, thus combining online tools with offline work. A short discussion with participants about their associations and perception of hate speech. (15 min)
(Online option: in this part, you can use Mentimeter or Slido and base discussion on these inputs).
3. Silent floor technique will be used. The facilitator should prepare three definitions of hate speech and write/print them on A4 paper. The definitions will be put on the floor, and participants will get 3 minutes to read the definitions and stand next to the one they agree with the most. After this facilitator will lead a discussion with participants why they chose that specific definition. (15 min)
(Online option: in this part, Google Jamboard could be used with definitions prepared beforehand, and participants can put their names next to the definition they agree with).
4. “Barometer exercise” where the facilitator will read 7-10 examples of hate speech (that should be context-appropriate, but also some general examples). Participants will position themselves along the barometer on a scale from 0 to 100. The barometer should be prepared

beforehand with paper tape on the floor. The role of the facilitator is to lead the discussion and ask participants why they agree or disagree that something is or is not hate speech. Before the exercise, the facilitator should emphasize that participants should express their opinions and not convince others. The facilitator can also comment on the statements relying on the definitions of hate speech. (30 min)

(Online option: Mentimeter Scales option with listed examples and participants then vote, the discussion is based on these results).

5. Short quiz for participants to check their knowledge and understanding of hate speech. The quiz can be made in Mentimeter, Slido, or Kahoot tools. After the quiz, a short harvesting exercise will be done, allowing participants to express what they learned during the workshop and the most important things they are taking with them after the workshop. This can be done by using a flipchart and asking participants to write there or using some online tools like Padlet or Google Jamboard. (20 min)
(Online option: the quiz is already an online option; harvesting could be done using Jamboard or Padlet).
6. N.B. be careful with timing in an online setting. The workshop dynamics are different there, so you might need to omit some parts. In both options, be careful to give enough time to participants to speak and express themselves. Leave some room for questions.

Working materials:

Materials for the workshop can be found [here](#).

Hate speech examples for barometer exercise:

1. (Name the group) have always had an evil influence on our country;
2. We should go to the streets and start killing all the members of (name of the group);
3. Keep (name of the group) from our country;
4. Nazi swastika symbol (or any other context-specific symbol);
5. All (name the group) are greedy, want money, and do evil;

6. A slogan used within a specific country context that has a historical background (e.g., one used in Nazi Germany or elsewhere);
7. I think our government should think about our immigration policy. I have difficulty finding a job as well;
8. I think (name of the group) religious practices are incompatible with our culture.

Narratives

Duration: 90 minutes

Human resources: 1-2 facilitators

Goals:

After the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Define what are the narratives;
- Describe why deconstructing prevailing narratives is important;
- Analyze narratives behind the hate speech within their contexts.

Methodology:

Lecture, discussion, group work

Materials:

Laptop, beamer, A4 sheet with a story, 2 sheets with stories for the group work

Instructions:

1. Energizer or an icebreaker to relax the group and set the working atmosphere. (5 minutes)
2. Reading the story about the Red Riding Hood from the Wolf's perspective. The facilitator gives instructions for participants to relax and close their eyes. A piece of background music from fairytales could be played in the background. After the facilitator finishes with the reading, the discussion with the participants starts. Some of the questions could be:

- Have you ever heard this story?
 - What's different from the story you know?
 - How do you like Wolf's perspective?
 - What could be the most important message from this exercise? (20 minutes)
3. Short theoretical input from facilitator about narratives, counter-narratives and alternative narratives, and how narratives are constructed. The information is intertwined in a discussion with participants. The input can be given via PPT, flipchart, lecture, etc. To find more about narratives and their construction, you may consult [here](#). (15 minutes)
4. Group work. Participants are divided into groups and given 1 story/article from the media that contributes to the negative perception of different groups in society. They are given flipchart, markers, sticky notes, and access to the Internet. Their task is to research this story, and analyze the main messages and actors using the following questions:
- How are the main actors in the narrative?
 - How are the "good" and "bad" guys?
 - What are the main messages sent to the public?
 - What is the emotional, spatial, and time dimension of the narrative?
 - What is the context in which the narrative is embedded? (30 minutes)
5. Presentations of the group work. Participants are given 5 minutes per group to present their work and answer possible questions. The facilitator, together with the participants, highlights the main points and conclusions. (20 minutes)

Social media and hate speech

Duration: 70 minutes

Human resources: 1 facilitator

Goals:

After the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Recognize hate speech in social media in various forms;
- Report hate speech to various social media;
- Raise awareness of the importance of reporting hate speech on social media.

Methodology:

group work, discussion, interactive lecture

Materials:

Laptop, cards with examples of hate speech, flipchart, markers

Instructions:

1. Energizer or ice breaker (5 min)
2. Theoretical input about the hate speech policies on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube, including speaking about protected characteristics and specific examples of what constitutes hate speech and how to report it. (20 min)
3. Group work: participants are divided into groups and given various examples of potential hate speech on different social media. They are given the task to discuss the examples and decide if that is hate speech and they would report it. (20 min)
4. Individual work: participants are given keywords to search for different hate speech examples on the platforms they use, and once the content is found, they should report it following the instructions from the first part. Participants then share what they reported. (15 min)
5. Conclusion and harvesting from the workshop were done by using the Padlet. Participants are asked to share the main learnings from the workshop in the form of Tweet-280 characters max. (10 min)

Working materials:

Materials for the workshop can be found [here](#).

7

**Abuse report**

Using a social media service's online tools or system to report harassment, bullying, threats, and other harmful content violates the service's terms of service or community standards.

Acts of violence

An incident consisting of a riot, a brawl, or a disturbance, in which bodily injuries are sustained by any person and require the intervention of a peace officer to restore regular order, or an incident in which a weapon is brandished, displayed or used. Act of violence does not include a peace officer's use of nonlethal devices.

Acts of Bias/bias-related act

An act directed at a person, group of persons, private property, or public property motivated in whole or part by race, color, national origin, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, or sexual orientation. A bias-related act need not involve conduct that constitutes a criminal offense. Note that all hate crimes and bias-intimidation crimes are also bias-related acts, but not all bias-related actions will constitute a hate crime or bias-intimidation crime. A "hate crime" is defined as any criminal offense in which the person or persons committing the offense acted with a purpose to intimidate an individual or group of individuals because of race, color, gender, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or national origin.

Alienation

The withdrawal of a person from the society in which he or she lives and of his or her commitment to its values.

Anti Gypsyism

The racism that is directed against Roma/Gypsies.

Antisemitism

Prejudice against, hatred of, or discrimination against Jews as an ethnic or religious group.

Blasphemy

Insensitive, offensive, demeaning, derogatory, disrespectful, or irreverent expressions about any religion.

Bullying

Means the intentional harassment, intimidation, humiliation, ridicule, defamation, or threat or incitement of violence by a student against another student or public-school employee by a written, verbal, electronic, or physical activity that may address an attribute of the other

student, public school employee, or person with whom the other student or public school employee is associated.

Bystander

A person watching something happening, for example, harassment, is not taking part or trying to stop it.

Censorship

Alteration, suppression, or prohibition of speech and writing by an external or internal authority has the effect of undermining the public interest. It occurs in authority subordinates' relationships, but in the modern age, it is mainly associated with the control of the ruling regime and the collapse of the rule of law.

Condonation

The excusing, forgiving, or overlooking of particular conduct.

Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

The European Convention on Human Rights prescribes a number of fundamental rights and freedoms (right to life, prohibition of torture, prohibition of slavery and forced labor, right to freedom and security, right to a fair trial, prohibition of retroactive punishment, right to respect for private and family life, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, right to marry, right to an effective legal remedy, prohibition of discrimination).

Crimes against humanity

Crime against humanity, a crime of international criminal law, was adopted in the Nuremberg Charter, and in 1998 it was included in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Crimes against humanity consist of various acts – murder, extermination, enslavement, torture, forced population transfer, imprisonment, rape, persecution, enforced

disappearance, and apartheid, among others – when, according to the ICC, “committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population.”

Cyberbullying

For example, harassment and threats that happen online, for instance, on social media or other internet platforms.

Deceiving

Using fake names, posing as someone else, or creating a fake profile about someone else.

Dehumanization

Alienation of human, moral qualities and attributes from a person or group of persons. People who experience dehumanization by some external factors consider themselves separate, unequal, and distant from other people. Individuals and institutions (such as the state or family) can dehumanize others, and this demoralization can have physical and psychological components. Dehumanization is the precondition of violence against a group of people because it is easier to justify it if the object of violence is stripped of its human characteristics.

Denigration

The attack on the capacity, character, or reputation of one or more persons with the intention to diminish one's worth.

Desecration

The intentional, willful, and/or knowing removal or disturbance of human skeletal burial remains, or burial furniture placed with a buried human body and/or treating such human skeletal burial remains irreverent and contemptuous.

Discrimination

Any differential treatment based on a ground such as “race”, color, language, religion, nationality, or national or ethnic origin, as well as descent, belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics or status, which has no objective and reasonable justification.

Empathy

The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

Ethnocentrism

The attitude that one’s group, ethnicity, or nationality is superior to others.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

A unique human rights monitoring body that specializes in questions relating to the fight against racism, and discrimination (on grounds of “race”, ethnic/national origin, color, citizenship, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics), xenophobia, antisemitism, and intolerance in Europe; it prepares reports and issues recommendations to member States.

European Court of Human Rights (ECHR)

The International Court of the Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg, which interprets the European Convention on Human Rights, i.e., considers lawsuits and investigates whether there has been a violation of human rights by one of the members of the Council of Europe against a person or a group of persons.

Flaming

Saying mean things and often in public forums or social platforms to humiliate someone.

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression refers to the ability of an individual or group of individuals to express their beliefs, thoughts, ideas, and emotions on various issues without censorship.

Gaslighting

An elaborate and insidious technique of deception and psychological manipulation, usually practiced by one manipulator on one victim over a long period of time. It intends to gradually undermine the victim’s confidence in their ability to distinguish truth from lies, right from wrong, or real from unreal, thereby making them pathologically dependent on the manipulator for their thoughts or feelings.

Gender

The socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.

Gender identity

Each person’s deep internal and individual experience, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including personal feelings and attitudes toward the body (which may include, if freely chosen, modifications of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical, or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech, and behavior.

Genocide

Any of the acts listed in Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court are committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.

Glorification

The celebrating or praising of someone for having done something.

Harassing (online)

Unwanted aggressive and/or hostile behavior with the intention of psychologically and/or physically endangering or scaring someone. In the modern age, harassment in the digital space is becoming more common.

Hate speech

Verbal or written expression of hatred towards a person or groups of persons because of their racial, religious, national, or ethnic affiliation, as well as other characteristics such as sexual orientation, sex, gender, and gender identity.

Hatred

A state of mind characterized by intense and irrational emotions of humiliation, hostility, or disgust towards a specific target group.

Holocaust denial

The act of denying, questioning, or expressing doubt, in whole or in part, regarding historical facts related to the genocide of the Jews during World War II.

Homophobia

Prejudice against, hatred towards, or fear of homosexuality or of people who identify as or are perceived as bisexual, gay, lesbian, or transgender.

Hostility

A manifestation of hatred beyond a mere state of mind.

Incitement

Statements about groups of persons that create an imminent risk of discrimination, hostility, or violence against persons belonging to them.

Inferiority complex

A psychological feeling of inferiority that is completely or partially subconscious. The term itself has lost some relevance as it has been widely used to describe any display of below-average ambition by a person.

Intimidation

Behavior is aimed at dissuading or persuading a person to do or not do something by using threat.

Islamophobia

Prejudice against, hatred towards, or fear of the religion of Islam or Muslims.

Marginalization

Making a group of persons feel or be isolated or unimportant and thereby limiting their participation in society.

Media literacy

The knowledge, skills, and attitude required to engage with all forms of media, including an understanding of its role and functions in democratic societies and the ability, both to critically evaluate media content and to engage with media for the purpose of self-expression and democratic participation.

Migrants

All persons who leave their villages and homes, either seasonally or otherwise, in regular or distressing situations in search of livelihood.

Minority

A culturally, ethnically, or racially distinct group that coexists but is subordinate to a more dominant group. As the term is used in the social sciences, this subordination is the primary

defining characteristic of a minority group. As such, minority status does not necessarily correlate with the number of people belonging to that group, and a minority may be more numerous than the group to which it is subordinate.

Minorities under international law

States have an obligation to protect minorities, national, ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic, and other groups. Any definition must include both objective factors (such as the existence of common ethnicity, language, or religion) and subjective factors (including that individuals must identify as members of a minority).

Name-calling

An insulting, derogatory way of addressing someone. Name-calling is common among children, and although it may seem like mere teasing, it can significantly damage a person's self-image.

Nationalism

A sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on the promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.

Negative stereotypes

A generalized belief about the characteristics of those who belong to a particular group involves viewing all members in a bad light, regardless of the particular characteristics of the member or members concerned in a given situation.

Racism

The belief that a ground such as "race," color, language, religion, nationality, or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons or the notion of the superiority of a person or a group of persons.

Radicalization

The process whereby someone adopts extreme political, religious, or social values inconsistent with those of a democratic society.

Roma

Not only Roma but also Sinti, Kali, Ashkali, "Egyptians", Manouche and kindred population groups in Europe, together with Travellers.

Sexual orientation

Each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender, or more than one gender.

Slurs

Remarks that criticize someone that are likely to have a harmful effect on their reputation.

Personal status

A person's legal or factual situation includes not only a specific marital, migrant, or professional status but also factors such as disability, financial position, health, membership in a trade union or other body, place of residence, etc.

Stigmatization

The labeling of a group of persons in a negative way.

Tolerance

The refusal to impose punitive sanctions for dissent from prevailing norms or policies or the deliberate choice not to interfere in behavior one disapproves of in principle. As such, tolerance has long been considered a cardinal virtue of liberal political theory and practice, espoused by critical political philosophers, and is central to a range of contemporary political and legal debates, including those concerning race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Transphobia

Prejudice against, hatred towards, or fear of transsexuality and transsexual or transgender people, based on the expression of their internal gender identity.

Trivialization

Intentionally making something seem unimportant or insignificant.

Trolling

Deliberately posting tedious and redundant comments or content on a particular platform with the intention of attracting attention or causing discomfort.

Troll factory

An organization or number of individuals that come together to publish large numbers of posts or messages on the internet that are meant to cause trouble, influence political views, etc.

Upstander

A person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, especially someone who intervenes on behalf of a person who is being attacked or harassed.

Vandalism

Vandalism means the intentional and malicious damage or destruction of someone's, often public, property.

Violence

The use of physical force or power against another person, or against a group or community, either results in or has a high likelihood of injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation.

Violent crime

Any crime punishable by imprisonment of more than one year or any juvenile delinquency involving the use or possession of a deadly weapon would be punishable by imprisonment for up to that term if committed by an adult.

Vulnerable groups

Those groups that are particularly subject to hate speech, which depends on national circumstances, but will often include asylum seekers and refugees, other immigrants and migrants, black and Jewish communities, Muslims, Roma/Gypsies, as well as other religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities and LGBTQ+ population. It predominantly affects children and young people who belong to such groups.

War crimes

Any of the acts listed in Article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Xenophobia

Prejudice against, hatred towards, or fear of people from other countries or cultures.

Everyone can be a hero!



O!

**no hate
no violence**



Youth for Peace
Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

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