



**UNAOC**  
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

**#SpreadNoHate**

*Hate* ←

**Tracking Hatred:  
An International Dialogue on  
HATE SPEECH in the Media**

2 December 2015 | UN Headquarters New York  
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# United Nations Headquarters Symposium, December 2, 2015



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## CONCEPT NOTE

### ***Tracking Hatred: An International Dialogue on Hate Speech in the Media***

*“Hate Speech shall be understood as speech covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.”<sup>1</sup>*

In 2015, the world economy has continued to heal at a slow pace, and new challenges have emerged, including geopolitical conflicts and terrorist attacks. At the same time, the push to escape poverty and political conflicts has remained strong for immigrants globally. Once they arrive in host countries, migrants are increasingly affected by anti-immigration attitudes. All over the world, there is a sharp rise in examples of both governments and individuals using hate speech against migrants and minority communities, blaming them for their nations’ struggles.

In this context, the media play a crucial role in the public’s perceptions of migrant populations and their integration by providing reporting and analysis that are objective, well researched and accurate. However, both deliberate and unintentional negative portrayals of immigrants and minority groups are often found in the media, thus negatively impacting people’s views of these communities.

Faced with intense competition, news organizations publish content as quickly as possible, often with less editorial oversight and fact checking, which results in more generalization, dehumanizing language, and the mixing of facts and opinions. Hateful language is also found online in the comment section of articles, which are rife with abusive language. Social media too provide ideal ground for hate speech. Their immediacy, accessibility, relative anonymity and the difficulty of regulating them, have allowed many hate groups to speak and to have their messages heard.

Today’s world is witnessing mounting and palpable tensions between those who seek an unrestricted right to speech, and those who want to protect society from those who use the media as a tool to spread hate. Debates and discussions are needed, and creative solutions are critical.

### **INITIATIVE**

In keeping with its mission to promote dialogue between cultures, civilizations, faiths, and peoples, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) is creating a platform for constructive dialogue on hate speech and the sharing of best practices to combat hate speech. Particular emphasis is placed on engaging the global media space and journalists, particularly those who are well positioned to report, comment on, and investigate xenophobia, hate speech, violent extremism and prejudice. Other participants include representatives of online social networking services, government officials, academics, representatives of United Nations entities and NGOs.

The UNAOC Hate Speech initiative allows participants to examine the different measures that have been taken globally to curb hate speech, and discuss their limitations. It is also an opportunity to explore the reasons why hate speech remains a pervasive element that contributes

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<sup>1</sup> Anne Weber: Manual on Hate Speech, Council of Europe Publishing, ISBN 978-92-871-6613-5 (2008)

to violent extremism, and the link between hate speech and the treatment of migrants. Finally, the UNAOC Hate Speech initiative provides a forum to look at the root causes of hate speech, the impact of structural inequalities and the stigmatization of certain groups in society.

The UNAOC Hate Speech initiative consists of (1) a series of one-day symposia in different international locations, (2) a strategic media campaign to disseminate and share key messages, and (3) a complete report with concrete recommendations. At each symposium, UNAOC expects a group of 150 carefully selected participants, composed of international professionals, and local participants in order to address the topic of hate speech from a global perspective while looking at local case studies and challenges.

## **DISSEMINATION**

### *1) Media Campaign #SpreadNoHate*

UNAOC has developed an intensive social media campaign to ensure maximum reach and greater impact of the cycle of symposia on hate speech. It actively engages its global followers, on several social media platforms, including Facebook (over 82,000 followers across its various pages as of November 2015) and Twitter (close to 10,000 followers across its various accounts as of November 2015). Before each symposium, UNAOC followers are invited to share their questions in preparation of the panels. During the symposium, the Alliance keeps its community involved by live tweeting the key messages shared during the various panels, posting photos, and by engaging directly with participants, partners and organizations. At the end of the cycle of symposia, UNAOC will use social media to advertise the findings of the report.

### *2) Publication*

At the conclusion of the cycle of symposia, UNAOC will compile all the information shared during the various panels and draft a complete report of the proceedings, which will include a set of concrete policy recommendations. This publication will be made available for download on UNAOC's website, [www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org), and on the websites of partner organizations, in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. The Alliance will share the report with an international network of journalists, media organizations, UN Agencies and other international and regional bodies, NGOs, and institutions of higher education across the globe.

## **OBJECTIVES AND IMPACT**

The work completed through the UNAOC Hate Speech initiative will benefit journalists of all nationalities, advocates, policy-makers and the general public by providing them with a more complete and nuanced understanding of the topic of hate speech, which in turn will contribute to a richer public debate. The program will also significantly contribute to a better integration of immigrant communities and the establishment of a global standard and legal framework for improved treatment of immigrants.

*For any questions related to the UNAOC Hate Speech initiative, please contact: [HateSpeech@unaoc.org](mailto:HateSpeech@unaoc.org)*

AGENDA***Tracking Hatred: An International Dialogue on Hate Speech in the Media*****Wednesday, December 02, 2015**United Nations Headquarters, Secretariat Building, Conference Room 4  
09:00 – 18:00**@UNAOC #SpreadNoHate****09:00 – 09:30            Registration****09:30 – 10:00        Opening Session**– *Opening Statements:*

- H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, High Representative for the UN Alliance of Civilizations
- Ms. Cristina Gallach, UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information

– *Keynote Remarks:*

- Mr. Jean-Paul Laborde, Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED)

**10:00 – 11:30        Panel 1 – Understanding Hate Speech in a Global Context and Across Cultures**

The rise of the Internet and the instantaneous global communications that it enables raise a number of questions about how to handle hate speech when it can be read, viewed, and heard by all types of audiences around the world. Hate speech does not have a universally accepted definition, which leads domestic laws and international agreements to vary widely on the topic<sup>2</sup>. Content that is considered acceptable in one place may be considered offensive, discriminatory or even illegal in other places that have different sets of values, beliefs and laws. A country's approach to hate speech is informed by its history and traditions. People's understanding of hate speech is also impacted by race, religion, socio-economic background, structural inequalities in society, and other factors. The objective of this panel will be to discuss the complexity of the topic of hate speech and the many nuances that it carries at a global level. This session will also provide participants with a general context for understanding hate speech in order to encourage their active input throughout the symposium.

***Questions for discussion:***

- How can we define hate speech?

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<sup>2</sup> Factsheet on Hate Speech, European Court of Human Rights (June 2015)  
[http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS\\_Hate\\_speech\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/FS_Hate_speech_ENG.pdf)

- What are sensible approaches to hate speech in a global context?
- What are ways to approach hate speech in different contexts and cultures?
- How can a reporter learn about local “red lines” when reporting on controversial issues at home and abroad?
- What to do with one’s sets of values and beliefs when studying other societies and cultures?
- What are ways to learn about the various understandings, sensitivities and perceptions of what constitutes hate speech? How can one contextualize them?
- What is the impact of structural inequalities and of the stigmatization of certain groups in society?
- Why does hate speech remain a pervasive element that contributes to violent extremism?
  - Moderator: Mr. Kai Wright, Features Editor, *The Nation*
  - Panelist 1: Dr. Agnès Callamard, Director, Global Freedom of Expression & Information, Columbia University
  - Panelist 2: Mr. John Yearwood, World Editor, *The Miami Herald*; Chairman, International Press Institute Committee
  - Panelist 3: Dr. Moustafa Bayoumi, Professor of English, Brooklyn College; Author, “How Does It Feel To Be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America” (Penguin Press)

*At the end of the session, participants are invited to ask questions and share comments with the panel. They are also invited to join the conversation online using #SpreadNoHate*

**11:30 – 11:45**                      *Break*

**11:45 – 13:15**                      **Panel 2 – The Media as a Vehicle for Hate Speech**

Hate speech in the media adopts many forms. First, it can be found in the content published and aired by traditional media. Faced with intense competition, those media have had to publish content faster, often with less editorial oversight and fact checking. This results in more generalization, labeling, divisive language, etc. Hate speech is also found in the comment sections of online articles. While those sections offer readers an important space to express their opinions, they are also ideal ground for hate speech. Finally, social media platforms have also become rife with abusive language. Their immediacy, accessibility, and relative anonymity have allowed many hate groups to spread their ideologies and to recruit people. The objective of this panel will be to assess the problem of hate speech in the media, explore the complexities of addressing the issue, and discuss best practices.

***Questions for discussion:***

- What are the main manifestations of hate speech in the media?
- How to balance freedom of expression with a need to prevent the spread of dangerous rhetoric?
- How can reporters avoid fueling hatred, especially when reporting on religious, cultural and political tensions?
- How are media organizations addressing the issue of hate speech?
- What role should media organizations play in monitoring hate speech coming from their audience? Should they play a role?

- How much space can be given to hateful voices in reporting? How to deal with the risk of inciting more hate?
- How can journalists include and manage strong, conflicting voices in their reporting, while remaining objective?
  - Moderator: Mr. David Gura, Reporter, Bloomberg Television
  - Panelist 1: Ms. Widad Ketfi (France), Journalist, Bondy Blog
  - Panelist 2: Mr. Michael Oreskes, Senior Vice President, Editorial Director, National Public Radio (NPR)
  - Panelist 3: Mr. Eric Newton, Innovation Chief, Professor of Practice, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University

*At the end of the session, participants are invited to ask questions and share comments with the panel. They are also invited to join the conversation online using #SpreadNoHate*

**13:15 – 14:15**                      *Lunch Break (food and refreshments will be provided to participants)*

**14:15 – 15:45**                      **Panel 3 – Monitoring, Regulating, and Limiting Hate Speech**

The anonymity, immediacy and global nature of the Internet have made it an ideal tool for extremists of all sorts. Often, it has enabled previously diverse and fragmented groups to connect, propagate their rhetoric, recruit, and organize. This rise in hate speech online is compounded by difficulties in policing such activities, and the Internet remains largely unregulated. Online regulation of hate speech around the globe relies on different legislations and governmental enforcement policies. It also largely depends on the definitions of hate speech adopted by the leading Internet service providers and the leading social media platforms, and how they choose to intervene in instances of hate speech. The objective of this panel will be to examine different ways and tools that have been used to combat hate speech, their efficiency, and discuss best practices.

***Questions for discussion:***

- What are examples of measures taken globally to curb hate speech? What are their limitations? What are the best practices?
- Whose role is it to combat hate speech?
- Where can we draw the line between hate speech and freedom of expression?
- What are steps news organizations can take to uphold freedom of expression when moderating sensitive or controversial comments?
  - Moderator: Ms. Nihal Saad, Chief of Cabinet and Spokesperson, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations
  - Panelist 1: Ms. Rosario Soraide, Project Officer, Freedom of Expression and Media Development Division, UNESCO
  - Panelist 2: Dr. Andre Oboler (Australia), CEO, Online Hate Prevention Institute

- Panelist 3: Ms. Sydette Harry, Community Lead, The Coral Project

*At the end of the session, participants are invited to ask questions and share comments with the panel.  
They are also invited to join the conversation online using #SpreadNoHate*

**15:45 – 17:15                      Panel 4 – The Impact of Hate Speech on Minorities: The Case of Immigrant Communities**

As the flow of migrants continues to rise worldwide, so do anti-immigrant rhetoric and examples of harsh treatment of immigrants. All over the world, there has been a sharp rise in incidents of both governments and individuals using hate speech against migrants and minority communities, blaming them for their nations’ struggles. The words used in politics, in the news, and in social media have consequences. As history has shown, rhetorical excesses can give rise to a climate of prejudice, discrimination and hate-fueled violence. The objective of this session will be to identify the difficulties that media professionals face when covering immigration, explore what can be done to guarantee both accurate and compelling reporting, and how the media can contribute to a better integration of migrant communities.

***Questions for discussion:***

- What is the link between hate speech and the treatment of migrants?
  - What is the role of the news media in combating hate speech?
  - What can be done to the migration narrative that would help curb hate speech against migrant communities?
- Moderator: Ms. Jane Sasseen, Journalist; Executive Director, McGraw Center, CUNY Graduate School of Journalism; Author, “A Clash of Cultures: Hate Speech, Taboos, Blasphemy, and the Role of the News Media” (Center for International Media Assistance)
  - Panelist 1: Mr. Ashraf El Nour, Permanent Observer for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to the United Nations
  - Panelist 2: Ms. Mirta Ojito, Director of News Standards, Telemundo; Assistant Professor, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism; Author, “Hunting Season: Immigration and Murder in an All-American Town” (Beacon Press, 2013)
  - Panelist 3: Mr. Wilson Liévano, Journalist/Editor, News animator, *The Wall Street Journal Americas*

**17:15 – 18:15                      Closing Session: Conclusion, Recommendations, and Way Forward**

The objective of this session will be to distill the conclusions that participants have drawn from the discussions and debates and to make recommendations to improve and enrich the media’s understanding of hate speech, and contribute to a better integration of immigrant communities.

- Rapporteur: Ms. Michelle Mittelstadt, Director of Communications and Public Affairs, Migration Policy Institute (MPI); Director of Communications, MPI Europe
- Closing Remarks: H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations

*A full report of the day's discussions will be made available on the website of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations ([www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org)). For any questions related to the UNAO Hate Speech initiative, please contact: [HateSpeech@unaoc.org](mailto:HateSpeech@unaoc.org).*