



The exponential rise in Hate Speech : A report in
commemoration of the international day for countering
hate speech



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A report in honour of International Day for Countering Hate speech



Photo by Jason Leung

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Introduction

In preparation for the international Day for Countering Hate Speech, it is important to highlight the rapid increase of hate speech globally to reflect and strategise on how to counter this issue. Thus, this report functions to raise awareness on the rise of hate speech and the effects of hate speech in the world especially as we near International Day for Countering Hate Speech. Additionally, this report functions as an annexation to the GICJ 2021 report on the increase in hate speech and hate crime.

In today's digital world, hate has become more rampant and widespread, making everyone more vulnerable to its reach. Hence, in 2021, the UN General Assembly, called attention to the dramatic rise in hate speech and declared the 18th of June as the international Day for Countering Hate Speech. A day for promotion of inclusivity, understanding and a day to promote the decrease of hate speech. On this day, the UN calls for people and organisations to identify and reflect on ways to counter hate speech.

In accordance with different treaties within international law, discrimination of any person has been prohibited and, in some instances, criminalised to assure the protection of the livelihood of all persons. For example, the United Nations prohibits discrimination and has enacted this in the *International Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination (ICERD)* . The purpose of this convention is to ban any form of discrimination based on race, colour, descent, or ethnic origin. All signatories to this convention, are to condemn racial discrimination and to effectively and without delay implement policies to eliminate racial discrimination.

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) is an additional treaty that further highlights the importance of upholding the protection of people against discrimination. For example, article 2 of the covenant states that all signatories of the covenant are to ensure that all individuals within their territory or subject to their jurisdiction are protected against discrimination based on race, colour, religion, gender, political opinions, or any other factor that can be discriminated against.

In 2025, we continue to see countries such as western powers foster a culture in which hate speech is accepted and used in driving political agendas. Politicians, such as Donald Trump increasingly used hate speech to propagate violence to gain success in their campaigns to which some have been successful. Additionally, there is a continued increase in hate speech targeted towards Arab people especially following the increased awareness of the illegal occupation in Palestine.

Furthermore, there has been a global increase in hate speech targeting women, often accompanied by persistent acts of gender-based violence. In the UK, over 70% of social media users have either encountered or been exposed to misogynistic content – predominantly generated by men and frequently laden with hateful rhetoric towards women. The United Nations ensures the protection of women against discrimination through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. (*CEDAW*).

In adopting the convention, the different states assume all undertakings to ensure that they uphold the principles of the convention such as:

- Implementing the principles of equality between men and women and abolish laws that promote discrimination
- Ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by all persons, organisations, and enterprises.

This report aims to highlight the growing rates of hate speech and its relations to hate crimes to further raise awareness to the ongoing crises that is the rise in hate speech. It will showcase different states and their efforts *or lack of* towards combating hate speech.

What is hate speech?

According to the UN, hate speech is discriminatory or pejorative communication of an individual or group. In its general sense, hate speech is classified as any form of communication whether it be oral, written, or behavioural that propagates violence, hate or attacks against another and/or that is discriminatory in nature against another person. In recent years, the media has significantly increased the spread of hate speech by providing platforms for individuals to spread hate towards others. This is due to the easy accessibility to different platforms across media and disinformation which in turn has seen a correlation between hate speech and violence against different groups of people, especially marginalised groups.

This cause is of importance to the United Nations due to some of its main goals which include to promote peace, ensure the protection of human rights and all matters surrounding that. Therefore, the promotion of the diminution of hate speech aligns with this as hate speech can sometimes lead to the infringement on the protection of human rights such as the infringement on article 3 (right to life, liberty, and security of a person) of the universal declaration of human rights.

Hate speech and acts of violence

Hate Speech is dangerous due to its ability to foster potential ideas of perpetuating actual hate driven harm. It poses an infringement to the enjoyment of life to an individual as it directly affects the individual as it subjects them to degrading treatment. However, when used together with the media, hate speech poses an even greater risk for not only the mental

wellbeing of the victim but also physical risk as there is an increased risk of physical harm as well. Additionally, history proves that hate speech fuelled with disinformation can lead to discrimination and stigmatisation which in turn can lead to large scale violence.

Across different platforms, there has been an exponential rise in hate speech especially geared towards marginalised communities. Weekly rates of hate speech on platform, X have risen 50% since the year 2022. In a report by the European parliament, it is stated that 63% of women have faced some form of harassment online, 38% of people with disabilities experienced hate speech and 17% of these groups have said to have been victims of violence. Within different states in the world, especially western powers, there is an increase in right wing movements that use inflammatory and purposefully degrading words towards marginalised groups. This in turn, purports an increase in hate crimes associated with the hate speech being spewed by these groups of people.

Notably, one of the most useful examples in which hate speech propagated violence, is in Rwanda during the genocide in 1994. Media was used to purposefully villainise the Tutsi people which in turn led to the killing of almost 1 million people. A modern example of this is in Germany in which it is being observed that there is a correlation between far-right posts on social media and attacks on refugees or advocates of refugees. Similarly, in the United States, extremists have continued to use the media to push anti-immigrant, sexist, racist and homophobic narratives which has led to an increase in violence towards these groups. These examples highlight different ways in which media has been used to promote violence against other groups and what effect that had on those groups.

United States and Hate Speech

When discussing hate speech and hate crimes in 2025, the United States remains a focal point for both as they are arguably a country notorious for both especially given their continued issues with different forms of



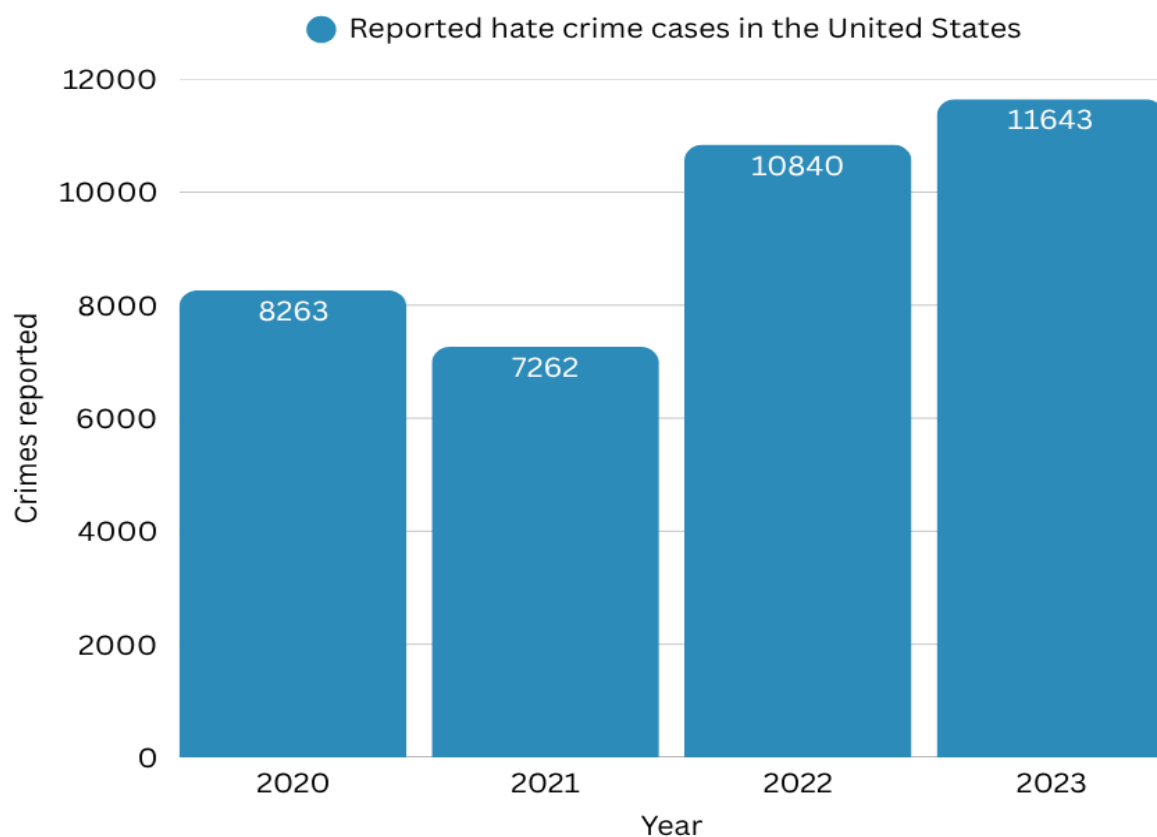
institutionalised racial issues. As president Donald Trump steps in for his second term, concerns for the safety of individuals against hate remain on the forefront of marginalised group initiatives. Within the US, hate speech can only be criminalised if it directly incites criminal activity or consists of specific threats to a person or group of persons. Most believe that this is fair as it aligns with their first amendment which is the right to free speech. This opens an avenue for people to freely use hate speech against other people without facing proper consequences. The Covid-19 pandemic fostered an atmosphere in which discrimination against the Asian community was further normalised. This rise occurred due to the ignorant narratives against Asian people following the outbreak. Additionally, following the presidential victory there has been a surge of Asian hate due to the rise in anti-immigration and racist remarks. Following the 2020 elections, the world witnessed some Americans storm the capital following hate speech on social media and under the instructions of Donald Trump. During this insurgency, the perpetrators carried different arms and zip ties with the intention to take hostages. Additionally, the protesters further pushed racist narratives such as leaving a noose on the yard of the white house which historically has racist connotations going back to the lynching of black people. Protesters were seen waving the confederate flag which is a symbol of racism and slavery with the understanding of the flag being that all men are not equal.



The US continues to make no efforts to implement policies that protect people against hate speech and the current president Donald Trump continues to make no efforts to advocate against hate speech. In reference to conversations surrounding immigrants, the president often

uses derogatory terms such as “aliens” and “animals” to describe immigrants, specifically those of Latin descent. He often uses ignorant loaded language such as stereotyping them as criminals to use fear to further push this hateful agenda. In turn, such negative hate speech translates to hate crimes against such people. An example of this is during the Christchurch shooting in which the shooter alludes to Donald Trump as a “renewed symbol of white identity” when attempting to justify his actions. In El Paso, Texas, a 21-year-old posted an anti-immigration screen in which he heavily spewed hate against immigrants and then shot at dozens of people in a shopping market.

In the 2023 crime report from the FBI, there was an indication in the rise in hate crime from the previous year citing that there were over 11,643 reported cases compared to 10,840 in 2022. The report highlights that the most targeted group of hate crimes was the black population at 51% with an additional increase of hate crimes against Hispanic people. Former president Biden also attested to the fact there was an increase in antisemitic hate such as it rose by 25% from 2021 to 2022 and amongst all religious based hate crimes recorded that year, they accounted for over half of them.



Conclusively, with the rise of conservatism in and out of the United States, there has been an increase in hate speech and hate crime in which we actively must work on dissemination against hate speech.

Germany and Hate Speech

It is illegal in Germany to use any form of hate speech against any person or perpetuate any hateful behaviour against any person based on anything such as race, gender, sex, and other discriminatory factors. However, as of May 2025, there has been a 40% increase in hate crime and hate speech driven by far-right political ideology. Although Germany has always faced issues with hate crime and hate speech especially towards immigrants and people of colour, there was an aggressive increase following regional elections and the rise of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party.

As of beginning of 2025, the AfD party has been labelled as an extremist group by the German intelligence as they cited that the party continues to insist on the exclusion of people of migrant backgrounds specifically from Muslim countries as equal citizens. This group and its members are known for their extreme language geared towards marginalised groups including women.



Additionally, leading up to the elections, the Trump administration showed continuous support for the AfD party which further highlighted the American government disregard for people of Muslim background and their vocality against refugees. The support of this part goes hand in

hand with acts of violence towards marginalised groups. One victim of the violent hate crimes is Mayar who is a nurse from Syria. He was brutally assaulted by a locally known neo-Nazi man who insulted him, punched, and choked him. This was not the assailant's first attack and although the matter was taken to the courts, the assailant's sentencing was suspended.

In 2017, Germany implemented the Network Enforcement Act which made it obligatory for social media platforms to report any forms of hate speech within 24 hours. In 2020, this law was updated to include the immediate reporting of criminal content to the Federal Criminal Police Office. There were concerns raised about the infringement on freedom of speech raised by many citizens, most stating that the implementation directly infringes on their rights and that they are concerned that these are efforts by the government to control people.

As shown in this report, there is a correlation between hate speech and hate crime. Germany is no stranger to this concept as they continue to have an increase in such crimes through the years especially towards marginalised groups and refugees. In 2019, Walter Lübcke, a pro refugee politician was murdered following his shown support for refugees. The murderer was a far-right extremist who heavily disagreed with the politicians' views and was heavily involved in groups that spewed hate speech towards Lübcke. Following his death, there was an immense amount of celebration online from neo- Nazis and support for the murderer. It was later found and revealed that the murderer was a man named Stephan Ernst who stated to have been encouraged by Markus H as he fed him Islamophobic and anti-refugee information.

As it pertains to hate speech against women, German laws catered to protecting marginalised groups from hate speech, was tested in the year 2020 and was faced with a potential legal gap. In a case in 2020, a man was fined following a series of hateful comments and promotion of content towards women with most of his comments stating that women were subordinate to men. Despite initially receiving a fine, he was acquitted through appeal as the courts accepted the appeals on the grounds that there was no official protection for women against hate speech in accordance with paragraph 130 of German penal code. This argument was accepted by way of omission as the code states it protects minorities but omits the word women thus, it was argued that women are not protected.

However, the Cologne regional high courts established that the code did indeed protect women as minorities included groups that would be generally seen as minorities despite not being expressly said in the code. Additionally, the courts found that the man's direct hate speech towards women, his demeaning attitude towards equality among sexes, and his disregard for human dignity all amounted to hate speech and that this should have not been

acquitted. This case highlighted the gap between legal code and legal implementation in the protection of women.

Overall, Germany continues to foster an environment that caters to hate speech and hate crime that specifically targets Muslim people and people of colour.

United Kingdom and Hate Speech

The United Kingdom remains no stranger to hate speech especially following the hate driven choice to leave the European Union due to the increase in immigration. The year 2022 was met with the appointment of the prime minister Rishi Sunak who led his campaign with the motivations of reducing immigration driven by the ignorant ideology that these were the root causes of different issues within the country.

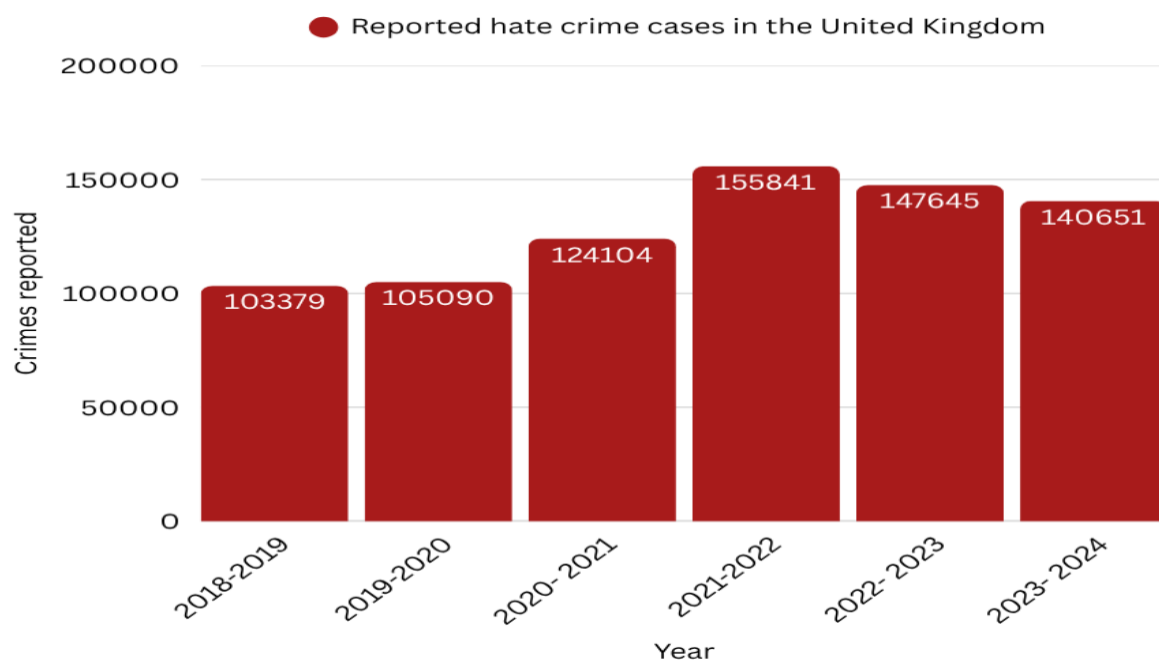
In summer 2024, there was a dramatic increase in hate speech and hate crime specifically targeted towards African immigrants and Muslims following the Southport killing of three children by an African teenager. There was an understandable sense of grief after this which led to public outcry for reform. However, during this outcry, it was falsely claimed that the perpetrator was an African Muslim asylum seeker which people used as motivation to attack people of these groups. Some of these attacks include protests outside a hotel housing asylum seeker in which the rioters proceeded to break windows and set fire to the fire escape in an attempt to burn down the building.



The United Kingdom has also seen a rise in populism which is the political approach that strives to appeal to ‘normal’ people who feel as though their beliefs are not being heard. Populism in the UK is mainly seen in the reform party which is driven by anti-immigration ideology with the leader of the political party, Nigel Farage aiming to have a complete freeze on immigration. The dangers of this rhetoric as seen in previous examples is that it propagates fear to nationals by villainising migrants which in turn translates to hate speech and hate crimes against immigrants. By May 2025 , 12 representatives of the Reform UK party have been found to have shared Islamophobic posts on their social media. An example of this is Paul Harrison who shared a poll that promoted mass deportation.

According to the UK government report on hate crime, there was a decrease of 5% on hate crime with 140,561 cases reported in the year ending in March 2024. There has generally been an increase in hate crime since the year 2015 with an exponential rise in hate crimes. 2021- 2022 saw the largest amount of hate crimes in the past 6 years with a record number of 155,841 reported crimes that year which was an increase of 25% from the previous year.

During the UK’s periodic review, one of the main recommendations included working towards tackling racial discriminations. This further conveys the message that there is a grave issue that continues to dampen the United Kingdom’s said efforts to equality and proper implementation of human rights.



Silencing voices: Hate speech against Palestine and their allies

In the year 2025, the need for access to information has become vital to keeping up with the current affair. Hence why social media has been a great tool for advocating for different marginalised groups in the world. Notably, since 2023, there has been a recognisable increase in support for the Palestine as people became increasingly aware of the ongoing genocide. However, hate against people of Palestine had been an ongoing issue prior to this as there were reports in 2019 of the surges in hate towards Palestinians particularly from the Israeli Government and right-wing forces in Israel. The Israeli government denied their participation in the silencing of people's voices but as research shows, they were the main perpetrators of the hate geared towards Palestinian people. In addition, this was not an isolated event as the UN recognised an increasing pattern of discrimination of Palestinian population in Israel as a human rights expert condemned them for these actions.

Across different social media platforms, there has been an increase in the incitement of violence against people of Palestine especially on platforms such as X and Facebook. The increase in hate speech was especially noticeable to the world following the October 7 attacks.

Silencing voices: Hate Speech against people in Iraq

Iraq has continued to face issues with the upkeep of human rights which has subsequently led to civil unrest from citizens as they took to the streets to protest these violations. Some of the main human right violations that continue to cause civil unrest include but are not limited to, enforced displacements and arbitrary detention. Additionally, citizens protested the widespread corruption that the country faced but have been faced with extreme censorship by the government leading to several advocates being prosecuted .



There is an increased pattern of hate speech and suppression in Iraq, often perpetrated or endorsed by political and governmental entities. Such actions not only violate international human rights standards but also contravene Iraq's constitutional commitments to equality and freedom of expression. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts from both national authorities and the international community to uphold the rights of all Iraqi citizens.

State-Affiliated Media Promoting Sectarian Narratives

Al Iraqiya, Iraq's state-run broadcaster, has faced criticism for disseminating content with sectarian undertones. The channel's board includes members affiliated with Iran-backed militant groups, influencing its editorial stance. Al Iraqiya has been noted for promoting Shia-centric narratives, particularly during conflicts involving Sunni militants, thereby exacerbating sectarian divisions.

Targeting of Human Rights Organizations

Additionally, Human Rights NGOs in Iraq, faced legal challenges in a hostile environment where advocacy for basic rights was met with institutional resistance, hate speeches by members of the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Parliament.

Hate Speech Against Religious Groups

There is an increased hate speech against the Sunni population in Iraq. During the review period, government officials, parliamentarians, militia leaders used aggressive hate speech against the governorate where the Sunni population are concentrated, labelling them as terrorists or cooperative with terrorist's organisations while in reality they were victims of the failure of the governmental troops to protect them from terrorist groups.

Another group in particular, the Yazidi (also known as Yezidi) people continue to face discrimination and are continued subjects of hate speech. Following the genocide of 2014, there remains approximately 200,000 displaced Yazidi people who were forced to leave their homes because of the attacks on their home. The International Organisation for Immigration for the UN found that 80% of public infrastructure and 70% of homes in Sinjar, have been left in ruins.

Systemic ethnic divide by the government has left the country and its civilians in uproar leading to further demand for change to a system that fully strips the current government officials of their official positions. The aim of this is to ensure that the new government is rid of all corrupt persons from the former government and ensure a clean slate for a government that is inclusive of all persons. One of the main concerns of the different protests in Iraq is the lack of inclusivity by the state such as the continued hate driven divide of different groups based on ethnicity. Additionally, there is concern over the rise in hate speech targeted towards advocates from the government such as the government has been working against the civilians advocating for change by prosecuting them and using hate speech to label them as enemies of the state.

Due to the protests, the Iraqi government has been working to silence the different voices through different violent methods such as torture and murder. One of the notable examples of this include Alaa Masthoub who was an Iraqi writer commended for his bravery when speaking up against the Iraqi government and the Shiite militias. On the 2nd February 2019, Alaa Masthoub was shot 13 times and instantly died.

Overall, as it pertains to Iraq, the continues to struggle with an ongoing issue of hate speech towards different marginalised group.

How to combat hate speech

The UN gives a guideline on some ways to combat hate speech but one of the main ways that is agreed on is education. Education provides a gateway to understanding of different groups which helps eradicate the hate at its core thus avoiding hate speech in its entirety. Education also provides the ability to look beyond and avoid falling into the trap of disinformation which is fuel to hate speech.

Implementing objective tools specifically targeted at fact checking information can also be a useful tool to counter hate speech as mass spread of disinformation. This ensures that within platforms are not used for the deliberate targeting of groups

Additionally, in a time where there is an exponential rise in hate, it is important to stand up against hate such as countering negative misinformation in public with positive, informative responses. In conjunction, report any disinformation created to propagate hate using the report tools within any given platform.

Conversation is an additional tool in combating hate speech. During the HRC 59 there will be side events such as the event on the 17th June that is geared towards discussing hate speech and the intersection of gender and religion. These events are aimed at creating open conversation on how to combat hate speech and what can be done when hate speech is used against different groups of people.

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) condemns all acts of hate speech in accordance with the motivations of the International Day for Countering Hate Speech. During a time of mass global connectivity, we urge for the upholding of the principles of this day to further foster a spirit of unity.

#InternationalDayForCounteringHateSpeech #CounterHateSpeech
#GenevaInternationalCentreforJustice#Geneva4Justice#GICJ #UK #US #Iraq #Iran

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