

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 origin¹.

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, immigrants face adversity and 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 blaming immigrants and minority communities 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 generalizations, 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 a moment of 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

The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) is creating a platform for constructive dialogue on Hate Speech and the sharing of best practices for global representatives of leading media organizations, online social networking services, journalists, government officials, academics, representatives of United Nations entities and NGOs. This initiative will allow participants to examine the different measures that have been taken globally to curb Hate Speech, and discuss their limitations. They will also look at the root causes of Hate Speech, the impact of structural inequalities and of stigmatization of certain groups in society.

The Hate Speech initiative consists of (1) a series of one-day conferences in different international locations, (2) a complete report with recommendations, and (3) a strategic media campaign that will disseminate and share key messages. At each conference, UNAOC expects a group of 150 carefully selected participants, composed of international professionals (30 percent), and local participants in order to approach the topic of Hate Speech from a global perspective while looking at local case studies and challenges.

DISSEMINATION

Publication

At the conclusion of the cycle of conferences, 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 the UNAOC’s new website, www.unaoc.org, and on the websites of partner organizations, in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.

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

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. Finally, the findings of the report will be presented by UNAOC and shared at various international forums.

Media Campaign

The Alliance is developing an intensive social media campaign to ensure maximum reach and greater impact of the cycle of conferences on Hate Speech. It will actively engage its global followers, before, during and after the conferences, on several social media platforms, including Facebook (close to 80,000 “Likes”/followers across its various pages as of August 2015), Twitter (close to 10,000 followers across its various accounts as of August 2015), and Instagram and Google+ (recently created). Before the conferences, UNAOC followers will be invited to share their questions in preparation of the panels. During the conference, the Alliance will keep 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 conferences, UNAOC will use social media to advertise the publication of the report.

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.

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