

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

MetMUNC XLVIII

Topic: Dangers of Propaganda and Hate Speech

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Hate speech is abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice against a particular group, especially on the basis of race, religion, or sexual orientation. Propaganda is information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view. The main causes of hate speech are exposure to propaganda and hateful ideas (including racism, homophobia, and xenophobia) which often sway opinions and spread these beliefs, prejudices, and discrimination. Although some argue that hate speech and propaganda should be illegal, the UN recognizes freedom of speech as a basic human right. However, many nations, both democratic and authoritarian, have laws in place meant to restrict hate speech, infringing upon this right. Although censorship is illegal in various parts of the world, how can we combat discrimination and hate speech without taking away people's rights?¹

In general, hate speech is a verbal expression of a discrimination that an individual holds against a minority. Because of the nature of hate speech, it is usually targeted at groups that already feel underrepresented in their society. Hate speech furthers the sense of isolation that these minorities may feel, and makes other groups view that minority as inferior.² In a world that is now more connected than ever, hate speech creates an avenue for racist beliefs in one location to easily influence citizens across the world. In some cases, groups of people who hold hateful

¹ <https://en.unesco.org/5-ways-to-counter-hate-speech>

² <https://sharingperspectivesfoundation.com/video-lecture/causes-and-consequences-of-hate-speech/>

beliefs can unite around that ideology and disseminate it, raising the risk that violent incidents or hate crimes, illegal actions motivated by negative feelings towards a minority, will occur. Though a concrete link between hate speech and violence has never been proven, the generally held belief is that one does exist. When hate speech occurs without restriction, especially over social media or when politicians incorporate it as part of their rhetoric, it can be taken as a sign that is okay to act on that hate.³ The issue is the difficulty that is associated with restricting these conversations without taking away freedom of speech.

Putting hateful, racist, homophobic or threatening remarks out into the world not only hurts the people who are targeted, but also yourself. Losing a job, being ridiculed by others and losing other rights are common results of publicly using hate speech. After white supremacist rallies in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017, many demonstrators were forced by their employers to resign from their jobs.⁴

The U.N. Declaration of Human Rights protects speech, no matter how offensive its content. In this way, hate speech and free speech are distinct, but still extremely intertwined. However, subsequent UN resolutions have stated that speech is not protected when it contains racist messages. Following this concept, most western nations do not protect behavior that crosses the line into targeted harassment or threats, or that creates a hostile environment.⁵ This includes hate speech. For example, the European Declaration on Human Rights, which many European Nation members abide by, states that it is often necessary to restrict speech that might incite violence or hate.⁶ Every nation in Europe, and many more across the globe, defines

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2018/11/30/how-online-hate-speech-is-fueling-real-life-violence/>

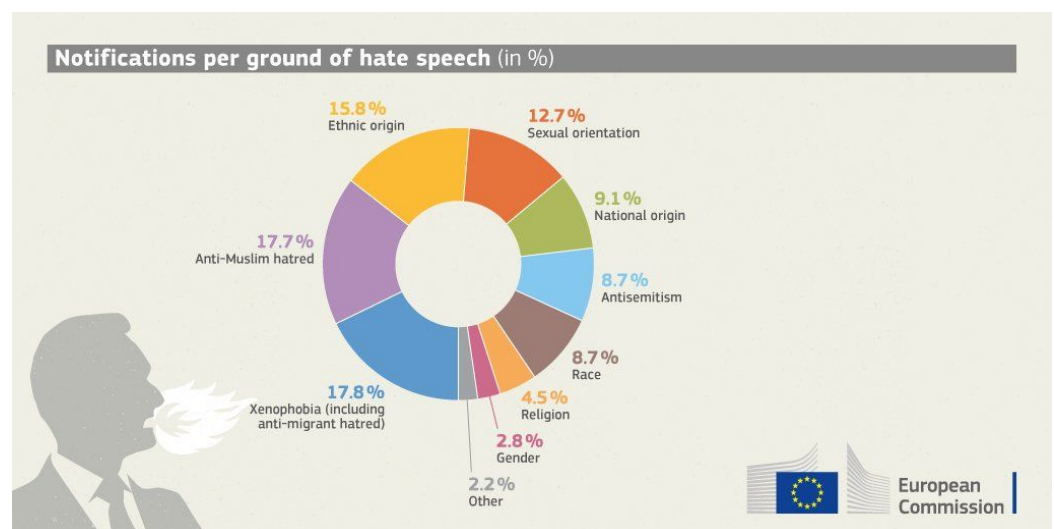
⁴ <https://time.com/4901200/fired-racist-charlottesville-white-nationalism/>

⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23944&LangID=E>

⁶ <https://www.legal-project.org/issues/european-hate-speech-laws>

extreme “hate speech” (though not always in those terms) as a criminal offense.⁷ Though consequences obviously vary by country, some politicians and clergy members have been subject to fines or even imprisonment for spreading ideas that target other nationalities or members of the LGBT community. Many of these laws were created after the Holocaust, but enforcement of them has drastically increased in the past five years. Supporters of these laws argue that true democracy can only exist with ethical speech. Detractors of hate speech laws argue that “hate” is

difficult to define, that the laws violate free speech, and that the laws set a dangerous precedent.⁸ Even in countries with no hate speech laws, such as the



United States, not everyone is in favor of unregulated free speech. A recent poll found that 64% of college students in the United States are in favor of censoring hate speech.⁹ Most African nations follow the principle that hate speech should only be limited if it will clearly lead to violence, and should only be limited “legally.” Critics point out that laws can be made so that

⁷ <https://www.dailysignal.com/2019/08/16/the-rise-of-hate-speech-policing-in-europe/>

⁸ <https://www.kialo.com/should-hate-speech-be-legally-protected-10134>

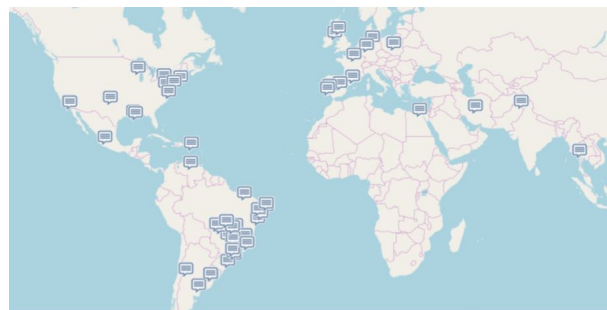
⁹

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/the-ongoing-challenge-to-define-free-speech/counterspeech-in-response-to-free-speech/

any means can be legal.¹⁰ For example, during 2013 elections in Kenya, personal insults against presidential candidates were deemed to be hate speech.

Hate speech laws are in contradiction with UNESCO policy, which state that “counter-speech is generally preferable to suppression of speech.” By counter-speech, UNESCO is referring to any speech meant to undermine hateful ideas. UNESCO notes that any hate speech laws that do exist should be specific, and should not be a mere “exercise of power.”¹¹ UNESCO has suggested many alternatives to hate speech laws. UNESCO encourages companies with power over the Internet, such as Facebook and Google, to make hateful ideas more difficult to access. They educate individuals in ways to recognize hate speech and not be influenced by it or bias in the media through their Global Citizenship Education Program. They advocate for the prosecution of hate crimes around the world, and work to keep the issue in the public eye so that the general public is not “numbed” to the concept of hate speech.¹⁰

Some groups, such as the organization HateBase, have kept track of hate speech online, and created charts to identify the geographic areas that are a source of a disproportionate amount of hate speech. Others, such as the Anti-Defamation League, have worked to educate children, teachers, and legislators about the negative effects of hate



10-Sep-2019	تازی	Iran	32.4279080, 53.6880460
10-Sep-2019	mulherzinha	Argentina	-53.7914000, -67.6990000
10-Sep-2019	mulherzinha	Brazil	-23.5587000, -46.6250000
10-Sep-2019	kurwie	Poland	51.9194380, 19.1451360
10-Sep-2019	mulherzinha	Brazil	-8.0756000, -34.9156000

HateBase tracks the use of hateful terms online in various languages and countries.

¹⁰

https://unesdoc.unesco.org/in/documentViewer.xhtml?v=2.1.196&id=p::usmarcdef_0000233231&file=/in/rest/annotationSVC/DownloadWatermarkedAttachment/attach_import_ec25fcc4-72f7-46c4-a8f4-5ad6a018f697%3F_%3D233231eng.pdf&locale=en&multi=true&ark=/ark:/48223/pf0000233231/PDF/233231eng.pdf#%5B%7B%22num%22%3A108%2C%22gen%22%3A0%7D%2C%7B%22name%22%3A%22XYZ%22%7D%2C5%2C709%2C0%5D

¹¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000233231>

speech. UNESCO has encouraged national governments to adopt cooperative efforts with NGOs such as these.¹⁰

This committee will attempt, first and foremost, to reduce the prevalence of hate speech in today's global society. UNESCO as a body views hate speech laws as a last resort, but many members of UNESCO do not. Potential resolutions should seek to reduce the spread of hateful ideologies without infringing on human rights.

Questions to Consider:

1. What has your country done to combat hate speech?
2. How does your country utilize propaganda?
3. Does your country allow freedom of speech?
4. How does your nation regulate hate speech, if at all?
5. How can people be punished for acts of hate speech without their rights being violated?
6. Does your country censor its citizens? Is censorship a common issue in your country?

Helpful Links:

- <https://en.unesco.org/5-ways-to-counter-hate-speech>
- <https://macaulay.cuny.edu/seminars/brooks10/node/105/index.html>
- <https://www.splcenter.org/20170814/ten-ways-fight-hate-community-response-guide>
- <https://www.stompoutbullying.org/blog/hate-speech>
- <http://queensu.ca/humanrights/initiatives/end-hate-project/what-hate/what-hate-propaganda>

- <http://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/social-clashes-digital-free-speech>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/14/opinions/fbi-hate-crimes-data-whats-missing-berry-wiggins/index.html>
- <https://www.britannica.com/topic/hate-speech>