

ANNUAL REPORT ON

MONITORING LOCAL

# HATE SPEECH



@#%!



@#%!

IN THE CITIES OF TETOVO, BITOLA, AND SHIP



**ANNUAL REPORT ON MONITORING  
LOCAL HATE SPEECH IN THE CITIES OF  
TETOVO, BITOLA, AND SHTIP**

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# INTRODUCTION

The hate speech and the aggressive communication are constantly present in the media, social media, as well as in the everyday communication. This speech has been accepted as "normal expression" of views, with which people give critical analysis or complain on a certain topic or social phenomenon. The intolerance and impatience in public communication are consequences of rooted prejudices and stereotypes towards different groups in our society. One of the numerous definitions that determines the essence of the problem is that hate speech is a striking form of expression that is considered offensive to any racial, religious, or national group.<sup>1</sup>

Such a situation also causes crimes of hate<sup>2</sup> i.e., verbal intolerance often leads to violent incidents, in which the victims and perpetrators are mostly young people. Violence between fan groups is one of the most common and illustrative forms of hate speech present in our country.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right protected by domestic<sup>3</sup> and international legal acts<sup>4</sup>, but it is still difficult to clearly define its boundaries. Sometimes, the line is so thin that free expression easily turns into hate speech. Hence, one of the basic challenges in this area is recognizing and defining hate speech, and then preventing and sanctioning such speech.

The judicial system, and above all the Public Prosecutor's Office, has a key role in this process and it is obliged to establish effective mechanisms of protection and effective prevention, through a measured penological approach at general and special level. Impunity for hate speech is unacceptable.

For the strong intensity of hate speech in the Macedonian context, a particularly important factor is the ethnic, political, and social division in society. The visibility of this phenomenon is especially evident on social media<sup>5</sup> due to their increasing use. One of the basic characteristics of online hate speech is anonymity.<sup>6</sup> The use of social networks does not require disclosure of the true identity of the individual. This encourages people to say things they would not otherwise say face to face.<sup>7</sup> Another noticeable feature of hate speech on social media is the existence of physical distance between the speaker and the audience, which further encourages the individual to express their revolt, anger, impatience by spreading hatred towards other people and entire groups of citizens.

During 2020, a significant number of hate speech cases based on ethnicity, political conviction, and people with different sexual orientation and gender identity were recorded. Ethnicity predominates as a basis both nationally and locally in the monitored areas. Compared to previous years, there is no improvement in the situation with hate speech in 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Walker, *Hate Speech: The History of an American Controversy*, Lincoln University of Nebraska, Press, 1994

<sup>2</sup> Crime of hate explicitly foreseen by the provisions of the Criminal Code, shall be considered the crime against a natural person or a legal entity and associated persons thereto or a property which is committed wholly or partially due to a real or speculative (imaginary, assumptive) characteristic or association of the person and relates to the race, skin colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or conviction, mental or bodily disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and political conviction.

<sup>3</sup> Article 16 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia guarantees the freedom of conviction, conscience, thought, and public expression of thought. Freedom of speech, public appearance, public information, and the free establishment of public information institutions are guaranteed.

<sup>4</sup> Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: No one shall be subjected to harassment due to their opinion and everybody has the right to freedom of expression. Article 10 of the ECHR also guarantees freedom of thought and expression.

<sup>5</sup> The platform [www.govnaomrza.mk](http://www.govnaomrza.mk) registered an increased number of hate speech reports in 2020, which is an increase of 280% compared to 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Brown, A. (2017) »What is so special about online (as compared to offline) hate speech?«, *Ethnicities*, 2-11

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

While preparing the report, the project team used an analytical-synthetic approach in terms of data collection, documentation, and analysis. The process of collecting data i.e., the recorded cases of hate speech in the cities of Tetovo, Bitola, and Shtip was performed on a monthly basis.

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights has hired six external associates for the project "Joint Action against Hate Speech". Two associates from Tetovo, Bitola, and Shtip, in coordination with the project team, followed the hate speech in their cities. The external associates were trained to recognize hate speech, to establish the legal basis, the protective feature, and to distinguish between hate speech and insult or defamation. Hate speech cases were reported by external associates and then confirmed and verified by the project coordinator. The analysis of the approved reports of hate speech cases is a source for the preparation of the report.

Monitoring local hate speech also involves direct field observation of cases by following sports matches and other public events where people gather - concerts, exhibitions, political meetings, etc. However, the restrictive measures for prevention of COVID-19 prevented the organization of public events, so in this case their monitoring was missing. The local print and electronic media were a subject of monitoring, and at the same time the internet space was monitored. Moreover, there were graffiti and drawings in these cities with hate speech messages written on public spaces and surfaces.

From a methodological point of view, as the most appropriate tools for preparing the report are used techniques of data collection and processing through direct monitoring and observation. The online platform [www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk)<sup>8</sup> is a tool through which the reported cases of hate speech are qualitatively and quantitatively processed. According to the obtained statistical data, conclusions have been drawn about the intensity and the most common grounds of hate speech.

Within the project activities, a total of three working meetings were held with the representatives of the Sectors of Internal Affairs from the three cities. The project team analysed the findings of the meetings on the problems faced by investigators from the three cities. They are related to gathering evidence, as well as uncovering perpetrators and prosecuting hate speech cases before courts. This approach to direct cooperation and meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is an additional tool for analysing the effectiveness of legal mechanisms to prevent hate speech.

The report covers the period from 1st January 2020 to 30th November 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Internet platform for following hate speech in North Macedonia

# AIM OF THE REPORT

The report aims to present hate speech cases in three local communities during 2020 while analysing the current trends in the area.

Also, this report aims to meet the general goal of the "Shared action against hate speech" project for raising public awareness of the importance of tolerance, respect, and equality, as opposed to the harmful consequences of hatred in public discourse.

## General situation with the national hate speech problem in 2020

With the creation of the web platform [govornaomraza.mk](http://govornaomraza.mk) in 2014, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights began to collect data on the situation in this area, given the harmful consequences of spreading hatred for the safety of citizens and social cohesion. So, the alarming information stands out that in the period 2018 - 2020 there is a trend of increasing hate speech, and the number of cases each year is twice as high as the previous one.<sup>9</sup>

In **2018**, 132<sup>10</sup> cases of hate speech were registered, 64 of which 64 were based on ethnicity, 43 cases were based on political conviction, 29 cases were based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and 16 cases were based on sex and gender. There were also cases of mockery towards foreigners (12 cases) and hate speech based on race, skin colour (7 cases). The other cases deal with hate speech based on social background, religion, and religious beliefs, as well as hate speech against representatives of international organizations.

Even more than 1/3 of the cases i.e., 34%, are cases of hate speech based on ethnicity, followed by 24% of hate speech cases based on political conviction.

In **2019**, there was an increase in registered cases of hate speech compared to the previous year, to 2018. The platform [govornaomraza.mk](http://govornaomraza.mk) registered 538 cases<sup>11</sup> of hate speech, 207 of which were hate speech based on ethnicity, 206 cases were hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity, 112 cases were hate speech based on political conviction, 109 cases were hate speech based on sex and gender. In 2019, hate speech based on ethnicity and hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity were most prevalent, accounting for 30% of the total number of cases.

<sup>9</sup> Source - the web platform [www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

In **2020**, the number of cases of hate speech increased again, approximately twice compared to 2019. In 2020, a total of 1119<sup>12</sup> cases were registered. Ethnicity remains the most prevalent basis for hate speech, recognized in 611 cases. 340 of the cases of hate speech are based on political conviction, 273 cases are based on sexual orientation and gender identity, 64 cases are based on social background, and 59 cases of hate speech are based on sex and gender. Nevertheless, the most common form, with 41% of the total registered cases, is hate speech based on ethnicity followed by hate speech based on political conviction with representation of 23%. Hatred towards LGBTI community members ranks high on the third place with 18% of the total number of registered cases of hate speech in 2020.

These latest data confirm that ethnic and political conviction, as well as sexual orientation and gender identity have been the most common types of hate speech in North Macedonia for several years.

## Overview of the trend of increasing hate speech from November 2018 to November 2020



Through analyses of the state of national hate speech, it can be concluded that the frequent presence of such speech is closely related to socio-political developments. In 2020, several significant events caused an avalanche of comments on social media. These events marked the so-called "peaks" of documented cases of hate speech in 2020 at the national and local levels.

In **January 2020**, the campaign "Discrimination ends with me"<sup>13</sup> was launched, aimed at promoting the rights of the LGBTI community. This campaign was criticized with great outbursts of hatred towards the LGBTI community. The day when the campaign started, 31st January, the platform [www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk) registered the largest number of hate speech cases based on sexual orientation<sup>14</sup> - half of the 68 reported cases in that month.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> <https://theworldnews.net/mk-news/kampanja-diskriminatsijata-zavrshuva-so-mene>

<sup>14</sup> [www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk)

In **February** 2020<sup>15</sup>, the dissolution of the Assembly due to the early parliamentary elections and the adoption of a package of laws, including the Law on Public Prosecution, caused a wave of hate speech against political dissidents, and hate speech between different ethnic groups<sup>16</sup> was present. Out of the 62 reported cases, 30 cases were based on ethnicity and 17 on political conviction.

The declaration of a state of emergency in **March** 2020<sup>17</sup> due to the risk of uncontrolled spread of the coronavirus also affected the monitoring of hate speech. Namely, the focus of the early parliamentary elections shifted to the circumstances related to the state of emergency, thus creating an opportunity to collect data on another protective category - health. Out of the 113 reported cases of hate speech in March, 49 were hate speech cases based on ethnicity, while 42 were hate speech cases based on political conviction. The first seven cases of hate speech based on health were registered in March.

In **April**, the health crisis took on an interethnic dimension, so intolerance between different ethnic groups was easily noticeable.<sup>18</sup> During this period, during the Easter holidays, a series of restrictive measures began that increased intolerance at the ethnic level as well. Hence, out of the 112 reported cases of hate speech, 53 cases were based on ethnicity.

The rally in **May**<sup>19</sup> on the Muslim holiday Eid al-Fitr<sup>20</sup> sparked passions and sparked hate speech based on ethnicity and religion hate speech. During May, 46% of the cases were hate speech based on ethnicity, and 20% of the cases were hate speech based on political conviction.

**June** marked the decision for early parliamentary elections. Out of the cases noted during this month, 34% have ethnicity as a basis, while 26% of cases are based on political conviction.

The campaign for early parliamentary elections marked the month of **July**.<sup>21</sup> According to the way this political campaign was conducted, as a result of the COVID-19 preventive measures, most of the messages from the political parties were shared and discussed on social media. Although much of the campaign was conducted virtually, a traditional campaign followed with rallies that did not fully respect the given preventive measures (especially when it comes to wearing masks). This contributed to the exchange of hate speech on social media, which, in addition to being political, also had an ethnic context.

<sup>15</sup> Decision of the President of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, number 09-1422/2 on 16.02.2020, announcing early elections for Members of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZaJgXtkpk&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZaJgXtkpk&feature=emb_title).

<sup>19</sup> [https://mhc.org.mk/media/pandemi%20ata-i-izborite-gi-vzheshiti%20a-soczi%20alnite-so-govor-na-omraza?fbclid=IwAR3BLQYqMT00OeY3HDB7Ng\\_gSO4dhxibRQyBOCa9nAtqCR7Qq4c0VpLms](https://mhc.org.mk/media/pandemi%20ata-i-izborite-gi-vzheshiti%20a-soczi%20alnite-so-govor-na-omraza?fbclid=IwAR3BLQYqMT00OeY3HDB7Ng_gSO4dhxibRQyBOCa9nAtqCR7Qq4c0VpLms)

<sup>20</sup> <https://mhc.org.mk/reports/mesechen-izveshta%20za-choveko-vite-prava-vo-republika-severna-makedoni%20a-ma%20-2020?fbclid=IwAR1Bt7Jp3-8-CDT7HPFxMuDPqJCrd4Ezu07MHTBuefjmRPundEaMb4Lq7o>

<sup>21</sup> Parliamentary elections 2020, 15th July 2020

In **August**<sup>22</sup>, the negative discourse from the July post-election period continued, with extremely intensified and offensive rhetoric. Negotiations over a new government produced hate speech that was primarily ethnic in nature in the context of negotiations to form a new government. Offensive language was used directly against certain politicians, calling them "sold out", "traitors", etc. In August, the ratio was as follows: 46% of the registered cases were hate speech based on ethnicity and 22% of cases were based on political conviction.<sup>23</sup> Also, after a long period of time, there has been an increase in hate speech in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity.

<sup>22</sup> Decision on elections of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 210/2020 from 30th August 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Source: the web platform [www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk)

## LOCAL HATE SPEECH WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CITIES OF TETOVO, BITOLA, AND SHTIP

Although each city has its own characteristics and specifics, the local context in Tetovo, Bitola, and Shtip is similar to the national context. Identical to the level of the entire country and in these three cities, the most common grounds for hate speech are ethnicity, political conviction, and hate speech against members of the LGBTI community. In all three cities, in addition to comments expressed in words and photos on social media, graffiti and drawings with offensive contents were seen in public spaces, causing intolerance, disrespect, and hatred between people and communities. The global health crisis has resulted in the cancellation of numerous events, so there are no reported cases of hate speech from public events in these three cities.

The attention of hate speech was adjusted with a focus on monitoring local radio and television stations, as well as social media. There was local monitoring of news on local media; posts from local portals, televisions, etc. - local Twitter and Facebook profiles and groups that posted contents related to the local context.

In Tetovo, the following web portals were followed: Tetovo today, Tetovo info, Tetova sot, as well as the Facebook fan pages of VMRO OK Tetovo, SDSM OK Tetovo, Napred Teteks (Go Teteks), Vojvodi, Shkendija, Balisti, and others. The group I love Tetoo was monitored on Facebook.

In Shtip, local media were monitored: TV Star, TV Iris, Radio Kanal 77, as well as the Facebook groups: Штипски Актуелности (Shtip news), San Shtipago, and others.

In Bitola, the following televisions and groups on social media were followed: TV Tetra, the web portal Apla, Bitolanews Bitola, as well as the Facebook pages: Битолски Проблеми (Problems in Bitola), Битола сака чист воздух (Bitola wants clean air), Стари Битолчани (Old Bitola residents), Спортски натпревари (Sports matches), and others.



### TETOVO

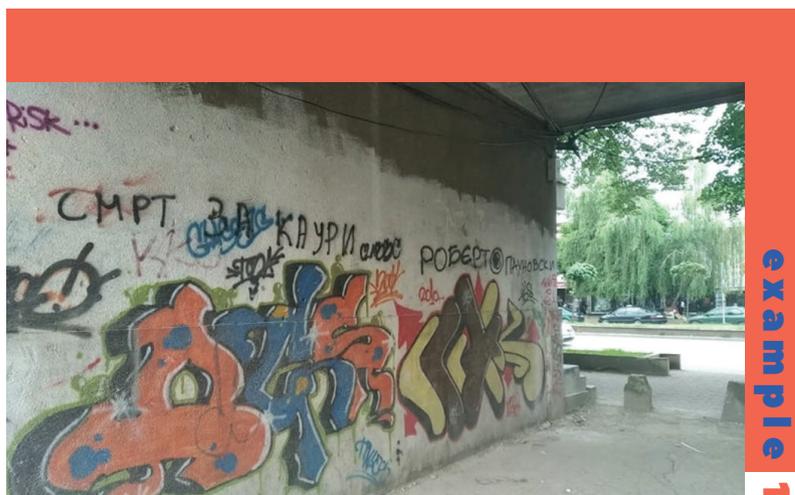
In Tetovo, in the period from January 2020 to November 2020, a total of 40 cases of hate speech were documented - 33 cases of hate speech based on ethnicity, four cases of hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and in three cases hate speech based on political conviction. Seven cases of hate speech were registered through drawings and graffiti on buildings and public areas in the city area. Six of these drawings and graffiti are hate speech based on ethnicity, while one drawing contains a message of hatred towards members of the LGBTI community. The remaining 33 cases were registered on social networks and they are posts or comments from the local context.

In a multi-ethnic local environment such as Tetovo, hate speech based on ethnic/national conviction dominates, directed from the Macedonians to the Albanians and vice versa. Intolerance, rejection, and hatred between the two largest ethnic communities are also present in the communication on the social media Facebook and Twitter. Also, in the very core of Tetovo, there are written contents on buildings, walls, and other public areas that are offensive and humiliating for the Macedonians or the Albanians. Graffiti with inappropriate texts are essentially a call for violence and are a serious incentive to commit crimes of hate among the residents of Tetovo.

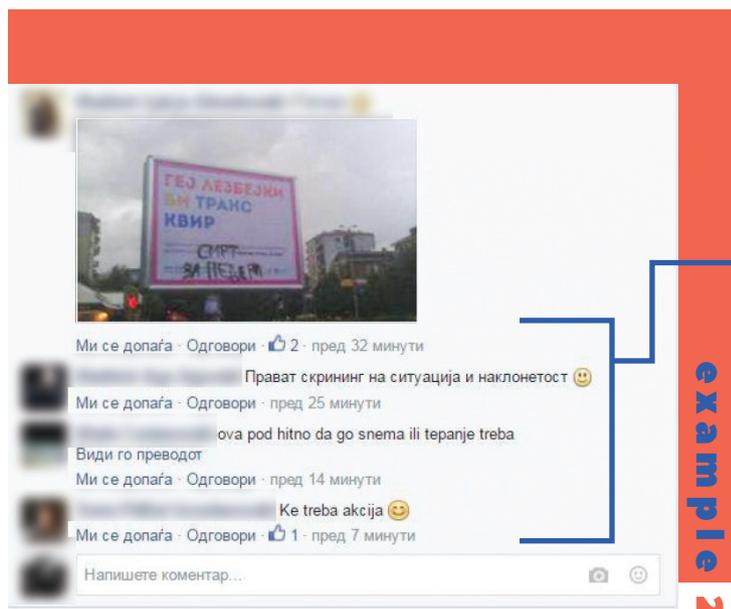
Prejudices against the LGBTI community are in line with the national trend of hate speech. Hatred based on sexual orientation and non-acceptance of diversity is the second most common hate speech in Tetovo. This type is present regardless of the ethnic context.

The third most common basis in Tetovo is hatred based on political conviction. Rhetoric was noted in the direction of highlighting traitors and patriots, referring to the political division of the inhabitants of Tetovo.

*Several cases of the most common forms of hate speech in Tetovo are given as examples.*



In a tunnel between two buildings on the street Marshal Tito, there is a graffiti that says: "Death to the Giaours". The statement contains hate speech that causes intolerance and impatience towards the Macedonians.



In the centre of Tetovo, on a billboard calling for equal rights of the LGBTI community, there is a hate speech inscription that says: "Death to the faggots".

### comments

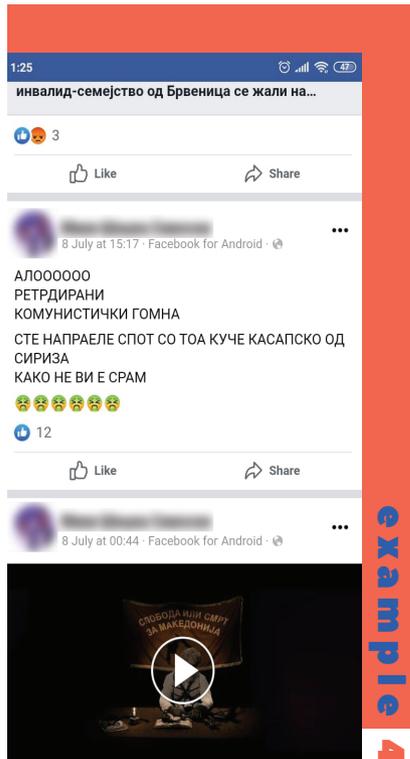
"They are doing a screening of a situation and inclination"

"This should disappear immediately, or someone should get beaten"

"An action is required"



Graffiti with "Giaoour pussies" was noticed near the Secondary Vocational School "September 8" - Tetovo. This vulgar graphite is a typical hate speech based on ethnicity.



A VMRO - DPMNE party activist from Tetovo fiercely criticizes the activities of SDSM during the election campaign, posting offensive contents on his Facebook profile with the words "Heeeey, you retarded communist shits, you made a video with that wretched dog from Siriza, shame on you". This post is political intolerance and impatience and contains hate speech based on political conviction.



A graffiti in the centre of Tetovo that says: "Tetovo is Albania".



## BITOLA

55 cases of hate speech were reported in Bitola. 49 cases were reported on the social media Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok, while the other six were graffiti and drawings on public areas in the city. Two of the graffiti contain hate speech against the LGBTI community, while the other four have a hate message based on ethnicity. Hate speech based on ethnicity was recorded in 36 cases<sup>24</sup> and hatred towards the LGBTI community was recorded in eight cases. Five cases of hate speech are based on political conviction, five cases are based on health condition, and one case of hate speech based on social origin was reported.

As members of one of the most marginalized groups of citizens in North Macedonia, the Roma, especially in Bitola, suffer the most intense hate speech<sup>25</sup> in the daily communication on social media. Out of 36 documented cases of hate speech based on ethnicity, 23<sup>26</sup> of them directly and explicitly target the Roma. The Roma<sup>27</sup> are pointed out as the culprits for every social problem or blamed for many social-pathological phenomena, which is confirmed in the monthly reports from the monitoring conducted in Bitola. Several Roma people were severely beaten by the police in September<sup>28</sup>, and the case was made public a few days later. This event caused a strong wave of comments from the citizens in Bitola on social media, which condemned the Roma as harmful to society.<sup>29</sup>

Hate speech based on health condition has become particularly frequent in Bitola because of the coronavirus pandemic. But even in that context, the hatred was directed mostly at the Roma.<sup>30</sup> Out of the registered 5 cases of hate speech based on health condition, two refer to the Roma placed in state quarantine.

As a result of the increasingly pronounced division of society, political intolerance, and impatience, expressed through outbursts of hatred towards political dissidents, are also present in Bitola. The early parliamentary elections and the management of the health crisis have provoked hate speech on social media based on political conviction. 10% of the total number of cases in Bitola are based on this.

Hate speech against the LGBTI community does not leave Bitola either. Unacceptance, intolerance, and discrimination against the LGBTI community is present with the same intensity as in the national news. With a total of eight cases registered in Bitola, two of which are graffiti containing hate speech against the LGBTI community, sexual orientation as a basis is in second place by presence, with 14.5% of the total number of cases registered in this city.

The phenomenon of the existence of neo-Nazi groups related to the Skinhead<sup>31</sup> subculture is characteristic of Bitola. Anti-Semitic graffiti and inscriptions are typical of hate speech in several locations throughout the city.

<sup>24</sup> 65% out of all cases

<sup>25</sup> Source - the web platform [www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk)

<sup>26</sup> 41% of the total registered cases in Bitola deal with hate speech towards the Roma

<sup>27</sup> <https://mhc.org.mk/media/helsinshki-i-ava%d1%98a-reagi->

[raat-na-nov-slucha%d1%98-na-policziska-brutalnost-kon-romi-vo-bitola/?fbclid=IwAR1hiAkmqjEcMfMEblpKjKi9oE9MJ27nlCEeIr\\_ybkJTPZcyojeRLEXS9A](https://mhc.org.mk/media/helsinshki-i-ava%d1%98a-reagi-)

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/pretepanite-romi-od-bitolskata-policzija-svedochea-vo-zhivo-ne-maltretiraa-kako-stoka-ne-tepaa-i-drzhea-vo-stanicza-do-5-sabajle-video/>

<sup>29</sup> Source - the web platform [www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk) (One of the many comments: "The Gypsies in Bitola are like the cancer of the city. The whole city stinks because of them, they steal, prostitute themselves, and they ravaged the whole city")

<sup>30</sup> Source - the web platform [www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk) (The case with the Roma from Bitola sent to state quarantine in the military barrack "Krivolak")

<sup>31</sup> Skinheads, Skinsi (shaved heads) belong to a subculture that originated with the young working class in the United Kingdom in the 1960s (1968-1969).

*Several cases of the most common forms of hate speech in Bitola are given as examples.*

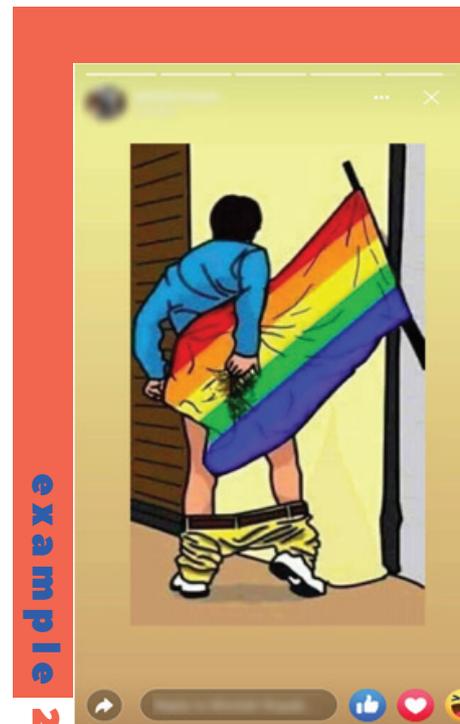


example 1



On Jane Sandanski Street, on the first floor of a building known as Sheherezada (Scheherazade), the inscription "Shqiptar" is written and there are several swastika crosses.

A photo was shared on Facebook through the "story" option from a private profile, which incites and spreads hatred towards the LGBTI community.



example 2



example 3



For the opening of the jubilee 15th edition of the AKTO Festival of Contemporary Art, on the facade of the cinema "Partizan" in Bitola a message was written: "Black or white or brown or yellow/Leave your old disputes behind/Once start talking with your fellow Men/you'll soon be of one mind" - this is an excerpt from Berthold Brecht's "Song of Solidarity."<sup>32</sup> In less than 24 hours, during the night, a message in black was written: "Death to the Serbs!! + Death to the Shqiptars!!!"

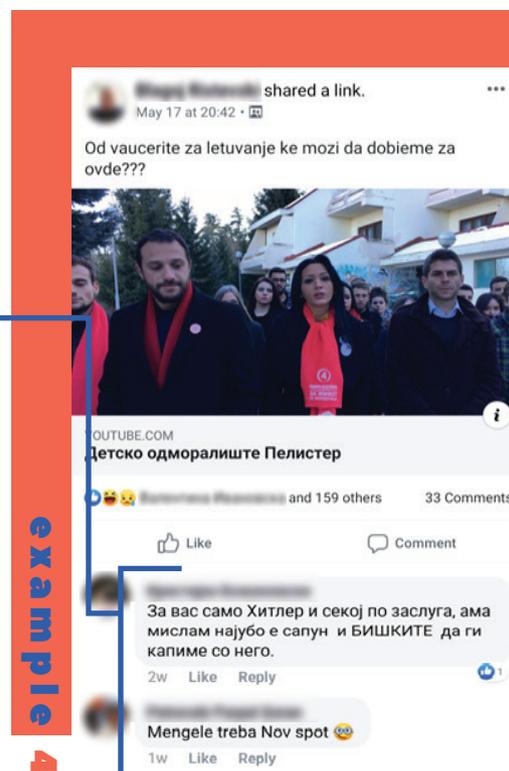
There was an announcement on the Facebook page "Bitolski problemi" (Problems in Bitola) regarding the renovation of the children's resort in the National Park Pelister. Under the announcement, users of the social medium wrote comments that contained hate speech against members of a political party.



comments

"Hitler is the person for you and afterwards everyone according to their merits, but I think the soap is the best solution, so we can use it to bathe our PIGS"

"Mengele needs a new video"



example 4

<sup>32</sup> Source of translation: <https://allpoetry.com/Solidarity-Song>



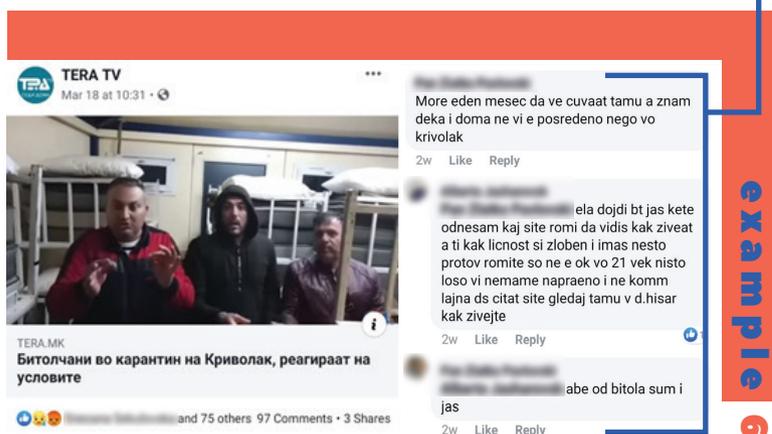
There was a post in the Facebook page "Bitolski problemi" (Problems in Bitola) shared by a member of the group. It was a photo with the text: "The Gypsies (THE ROMA) will kill us for the wretched votes".

## comments

"You should be kept there for a month, and I know that your homes don't look that good as Krivolak."

"Come, brother, I'll take you to see the homes of the Roma, you'll see their conditions. You are mean as a person and you have something against the Roma, which is not okay since this is the 21st century. We haven't done anything wrong to you and don't talk shit here so everyone can read. Mind your life in Demir Hisar."

"I am also from Bitola."



A group of Roma people placed in quarantine in the barracks in Krivolak report on the horrible conditions in which they are placed and publish a video about the situation there: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzZaJgXtKpk&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzZaJgXtKpk&feature=emb_title). The Roma citizens say that all the others were released into home isolation or quarantine and that only they are kept here. This news report was published by the local television Tera; the announcement is followed by sharp criticism and hatred towards these people because they could not handle the conditions.



## SH TIP

In Shtip, the situation with hate speech is approximately as frequent and as intense as the other two cities. The intolerance and non-acceptance of differences are expressed through discriminatory speech visible on social media. Identically to the national context, hate speech based on ethnicity is most prevalent in this city as well. The same goes for hatred based on political conviction.

Verbal attacks towards the LGBTI community are also one of the most common types of hatred in the everyday communication on social media, and it is also present in the form of graffiti on public spaces throughout the city. Hate speech based on religious conviction was recorded in Shtip, especially in the period of religious holidays.

A total of 36 cases of hate speech were reported in Shtip. Hate speech based on ethnicity is the most common with 23 cases. Six of the cases are hate speech based on political conviction, and six cases are based on sexual orientation and gender identity. A case of hate speech based on religion and religious conviction has been reported. Three cases of hate speech are recorded on drawings and graffiti on buildings and public areas of the city. The first one is based on political conviction, the second one is based on ethnicity, and the third one is a post with contents directed against the LGBTI community. The other 33 cases are registered on the social media and are posts or comments for events in the city of Shtip.

*Several cases of the most common forms of hate speech in Shtip are given as examples.*

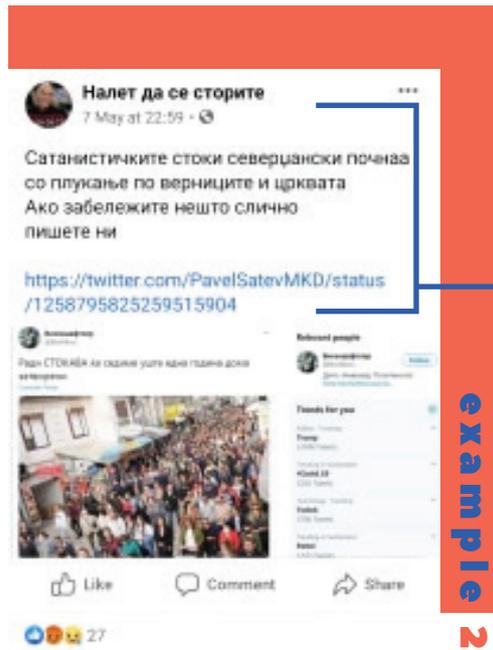


example 1



Graffiti that contain hate speech based on ethnicity, as well as a hidden hate speech based on political dissidents.

Left photo - "Shqiptars racket"  
Right photo - "Zaev is Shqiptar"



A photo of a gathering of believers was posted on the Facebook page "Nalet da se storite" (Damn you). The text of the post incites and provokes impatience and intolerance and contains hate speech based on ethnicity and religion.

### comments

"Satanic and severdzan<sup>33</sup> pigs, they started spitting on believers and the Church. If you notice something similar, message us."

### comments

"The campaign 'Die as a Shqiptar' has started... Crpko<sup>34</sup> is organizing elections on 5th July... The mad is going madder..."

A photo with a modified logo of the political party SDSM was posted on the Twitter profile "Thunder Strake", on which the emblem of the UCK (NLA) was inserted inside the star. This photo spreads and incites hate speech based on ethnicity.

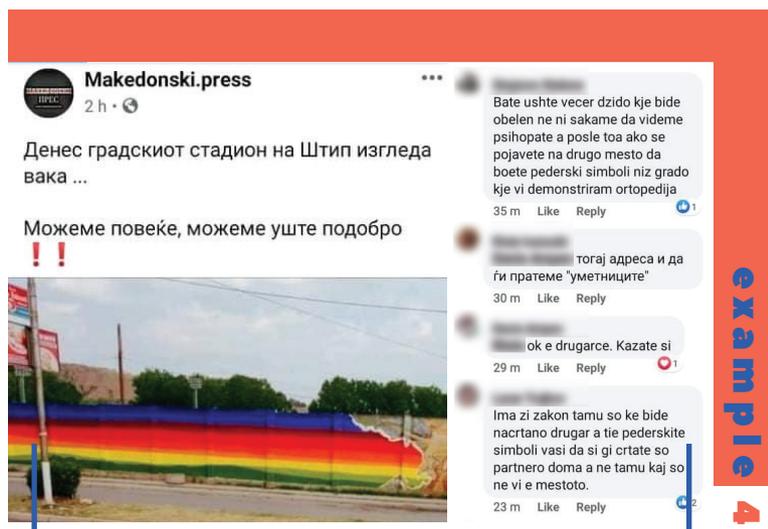


example  
3



<sup>33</sup> Derogatory term for the citizens of North Macedonia after the change of the name of country from "Republic of Macedonia" to "Republic of North Macedonia" (Translator's note)

<sup>34</sup> Derogatory term for the Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia (Translator's note)



## comments

Makedonski.press - "Today, the City Stadium in Shtip looks like this... We can do more, we can do even better."

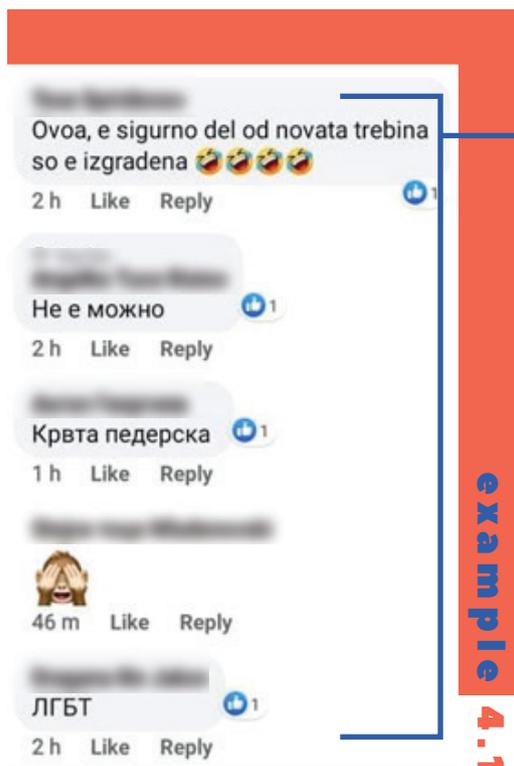
"Mate, tonight the wall is going to be white. We don't want to look at psychopaths. After that, if you show up to put one more faggoty symbol on another wall, I'll demonstrate an orthopaedic surgery on you".

"Give the address, then, and we'll follow the 'artists'."

"It's okay, buddy. You have said it."

"There is a law what should be drawn there, and you can draw those faggotty symbols with your partner at home, not on places where you shouldn't."

On the walls of the City Stadium in Shtip, an art installation was drawn - a mural in the colours of the rainbow as a symbol of the LGBTI community. The news was shared on the Facebook page Makedonski.press, and the post is followed by comments with hate speech, impatience, and intolerance towards the LGBTI community. The same evening, after the mural had been drawn, an unknown group of perpetrators wrote graffiti on the mural with the content: "Faggots, die of AIDS."



example 4.1

comments

"This is probably part of the new platform they built."

"It can't be possible."

"Fuck their faggotty blood."

comments

"Feel free to join. I'll exclude you from life. The wall will be white, Shtip is not a city of faggots. Demonstrate that somewhere else. Anyone who draws something, evil will befall on them."

"Nothing is eternal, not even the mural. I am sorry you haven't even seen what was drawn, and you think like this. Greetings."

"It's ok."

"Mate, the wall will be white tonight. We don't want to look at psychopaths. Afterwards, if you show up elsewhere and try to colour faggotty symbols around the city..."



example 4.2

## INFORMATIONS FROM SECTORS FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS IN TETOVO, BITOLA AND SH TIP

Within the project activities, meetings were held with the representatives of the Sectors for internal affairs in Tetovo, Bitola, and Shtip. The meetings were held primarily with the intention of establishing cooperation, but also to share information and experiences on reported local cases of hate speech.

The conclusion from all the meetings is that regarding the problem of hate speech, the inspectors face the same challenges in all areas. There are fan sports groups in all three cities, which often cause incidents and always send hate messages. Very few cases have a final court decision.

Despite the existence of "Standard Operating Procedures" within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there is a lack of clear precise rules for dealing with cases of hate speech. Certain crimes<sup>35</sup> are too voluminous to include all cases of hate speech.

The inspectors pointed out the need for training of police officers and preparation of Manuals - guides for recognizing crimes, in which hate speech is shown as incrimination. Difficulties were also pointed out in gathering evidence, proving crimes, and finding perpetrators, especially those committed through a computer system. The inspectors requested that in the future the organized trainings be designed in the direction of elaborating specific cases and sharing the best European practices.

<sup>35</sup> Article 319 of the Criminal Code - Causing hatred, discord, or intolerance on national, racial, and religious ground

# CONCLUSIONS

- 1** The most common hate speech at both national and local level is hate speech based on ethnicity.
- 2** The political division of the citizens of the cities Tetovo, Bitola and Shtip, results in hate speech towards political opponents.
- 3** Prejudices and stereotypes towards members of the LGBTI community are visible in the three cities, as shown by the statistics of hate speech against this group.
- 4** The development of technology has led to the rapid development of social media<sup>36</sup> which has become a major place for the exchange of information and messages at high speed, and thus enabled the rapid spread of hate speech.
- 5** Due to the lack of a clear legal framework and training for the recognition of hate speech, the Sectors of Internal Affairs in the three cities have difficulties in recording, registering, and reporting such acts, gathering evidence, and processing them to the competent public prosecutor's offices.
- 6** Legislation needs to be changed in such a way that certain lesser forms of hate speech would be treated as offenses, and a clear distinction and legal qualification of all forms of hate speech is also needed.

<sup>36</sup> Facebook, Twitter, Instagram

# RECOMMENDATIONS

In accordance with the findings and conclusions of the report, in order to detect and prevent the increased intensity of hate speech and to promote the principle of tolerance and non-discrimination, the following recommendations are proposed:

- 1** Establishment of a comprehensive educational preventive mechanism in primary and secondary education within the subject Civic Education, so differences can be accepted early, and prejudices overcome.
- 2** Support and implementation of public campaigns by the executive and local government in order to sensitize the public to accept diversity, based on tolerance and respect.
- 3** Bearing in mind the fact that hate speech against people with different sexual orientation is the third most common hate speech, we recommend amending the Criminal Code and adding sexual orientation and gender identity as one of the grounds for prosecuting perpetrators.
- 4** Proactive role of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the part of monitoring hate speech on social media, as well as timely reaction and reporting of such acts.

- 5 Systematic trainings for the employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the area of hate speech and crime of hate.
- 6 Timely and efficient handling of the Public Prosecutor's Office in cases related to hate speech.
- 7 Establish a clear legal framework to effectively sanction hate speech.





**ANNUAL REPORT ON MONITORING  
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