

MONITORING OF HATE SPEECH IN NORTH MACEDONIA

JANUARY - MAY 2023

within the project: Anti-Hate Speech in the Western Balkans



The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights continued to actively work in the field of hate speech in 2023. The Committee continued the already established systematic monitoring of hate speech in Republic of North Macedonia, focusing on social media, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok. The main purpose of the monitoring on hate speech is to determine which protective categories are most affected and at which intensity and volume.

The web platform <https://www.govornaomraza.mk/> acts as a hub where all citizens can report hate crimes on all grounds listed in the Law: ethnically, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic background etc. The platform provides information to the users on how to recognize hate speech through the examples, as well as overview of already submitted reports. The ultimate goal of this platform is to raise citizens' awareness of the phenomenon of hate speech in the public space, which will help them to oppose it, and thus prevent its spread in society.

North Macedonia has developed legal framework in the field of human rights protection and protection and prevention of discrimination such as the Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination. Hate speech is a crime defined in the Criminal Code that can result in prison sentences. The state also has protection mechanisms, the Ministry of the Interior, the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, and the Ombudsman. However, the case law in North Macedonia continues to be poor especially in protecting the most vulnerable and marginalized.

HATE SPEECH BY ETHNICITY

At the top of the table, HATE SPEECH BY ETHNICITY is the most prevalent, with a total of 144 registered cases or 48% of the total number of registered cases. When analyzing the cases based on ethnicity, mistrust between the different ethnic communities was observed, especially between the two largest ethnic communities in the country. A discourse referring to and returning to the 2001 military conflict and intensifying hate speech has been observed.

SPEECH TOWARDS SEXUAL MINORITIES AND DIFFERENT GENDER IDENTITIES

The speech towards sexual minorities and different gender identities in the country was not absent even in this period of monitoring with a total of 78 registered cases or 26% of the total number of registered cases. Prejudice against this community was especially visible with the observance of May 17 - the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia. This period was also marked by the Latas-Lazarov case, for which the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office from Skopje opened an investigation following a report from the Department for Computer Crime and Digital Forensics for Spreading xenophobic and racist material on a computer system in accordance with Article 394d of the Criminal Code, due to suspicion that the YouTuber Lazarov in the podcast with the journalist Latas, published on the YouTube platform, promoted gender - based violence and rape of women.

HATE SPEECH DUE TO NATIONALITY AND XENOPHOBIC HATE SPEECH

Hate speech due to nationality and xenophobic hate speech was observed on social networks, 41 cases of hate speech were registered based on nationality, or 13,71% of the total number of registered cases. This culminated after the news of the murder of a young migrant woman by a police officer at the Bogorodica border crossing that happened in April.

REGISTERED
299
CASES

144 CASES
ETHNICITY

41 CASES
NATIONALITY AND
XENOPHOBIC

78 CASES
GENDER AND
SEXUAL MINORITIES

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www.govornaomraza.mk

MONITORING OF HATE SPEECH IN KOSOVO

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During the reporting period hate-speech towards most vulnerable groups was present in the media outlets in Kosovo. There were several events that incentivized hate-speech mainly through comments section on Facebook and other social media. YIHR KS has reviewed articles related to these communities in most viewed online portals on Facebook and other media and found a lot of cases of hate speech presented below.

THE SCHOOL SHOOTING IN BELGRADE, SERBIA AND HATE SPEECH TOWARDS NON-MAJORITY COMMUNITIES



On May 3, 2023 a school shooting occurred in Belgrade, Serbia where a 13 year old student opened fire on other students and school staff resulting on death of many individuals. After this event, candles were lightened in front of the National Theatre in Prishtina, Kosovo to solidarize with the families of the victims. Apart from that, the President sent condolences to the families of the victims via her account on Twitter. The hate speech spread mainly through comments sections was very high and con-

cerning. YIHR KS has checked five popular online portals including here: "Kallxo.com", "Koha.net", "Kanali 10", "Insajderi" and "Sinjali", that posted the news about this event and they received a number of around 10k comments in total. The majority of the comments contained hate-speech based on ethnicity.

HATE SPEECH TOWARDS WOMEN

Hate speech towards women continues to be present in the media outlets. In March 2023 a concluded case of sexual harassment of Medine Dauti, a human rights activist, reported on the media received a number of comments containing hate speech and victim blaming. Apart from that there were many cases of rape, sexual harassments and femicide that received hate speech content towards women. In 7 articles in online Facebook portals, namely: "Kallxo.com", "Koha.net", "Kanali 10", "Insajderi" and "Sinjali" and "Telegrafii" in which violence towards women was reported a number of 177 comments were identified and the majority of them contained hate speech towards women.

HATE SPEECH TOWARDS LGBTIQ+ COMMUNITY

LGBTIQ+ is one of the most targeted group when it comes to hate speech in Kosovo. During the reported period LGBTIQ+ people were exposed to hate speech mainly through comments in Facebook. Victoria Owens is a queer person that has been part of a reality show in Kosovo called "Big Brother Vip" which has been broadcasted by Klan Kosova, a big media in Kosovo. YIHR KS reviewed 4 articles in 4 Facebook portals out of 301 comments, there were 38 pure hate speech comments among others comments which also contained curse, smear campaigns towards this community in Kosovo.

In Kosovo International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia is being marked yearly on the 17th of May. This year, the buildings of the government and the building of the Ombudsman Institution have been lightened in order to mark this day. The photos were shared in different media outlets and in the webpages of the human rights organizations and they received a number of hate comments.

During the reporting period, YIHR KS has observed an increase in the number of comments containing hate speech based on the ethnicity (mainly towards Serb community in Kosovo) due to the recent happenings mentioned above, in comparison with other marginalized groups that are mostly targeted in Kosovo. It is worth mentioning that the Facebook do not recognise the hate speech in Albanian language therefore it is very difficult to report it online or to restrict the comments in this platform.



YOUTH INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
INICIJATIVA MLADIH ZA LJUDSKA PRAVA
NISMA E TË RINJVE PËR TË DREJTAT E NJËRIUT