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# HATE SPEECH, DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AND EXTREMISM

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## HATE SPEECH, DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AND EXTREMISM

BY: **BADR SULEIMAN AL-AAMER**

Speech is a medium of communication that takes place between a sender and a receiver in a social, political, and cultural space. It implies a variety of positive and negative undertones. Although speech has great benefits in deepening the values of coexistence, love and peace, it may also turn into a huge destructive force due to its enormous ability to motivate; and early harbinger that give rise to major conflicts and problems. A good case in point is the following ancient line of Arab poetry that shows the impact of speech on people's minds and emotions:

Truly, fire stokes with two sticks                      as truly war starts with words

Speech is mentioned in the Holy Quran in the context of understandability couched in subtle rhetoric that was not understood by one of the prophets of Allah Almighty, as revealed in the following verses: (Indeed, this is my brother, has ninety-nine ewes, and I have one ewe, so he said, "entrust her to me, and he overpowered me with speech." (David) said, he has certainly wronged you in demanding your ewe (in addition) to his ewes. And indeed, many associates oppress one another, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds- and few are they." And David became certain that We had tried him and asked forgiveness of his Lord and fell down bowing (in prostration) and turned in repentance (to Allah). (Surah Sad, verses; 23, 24).

Thus, speech may turn truth into falsehood, and injustice into justice. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) warned against using speech to infringe upon the rights of others and wrong them by being more eloquent. (He (ﷺ) said; (I am a human being and the claimants bring to me (the dispute) and perhaps some of you are more eloquent than the others. So, I give judgement on their behalf according to what I hear from them. (Bear in mind, in my judgment) if I slice off anything for him from the right of his brother, he should not accept that, for I sliced off for him a portion from the Hell.

(Agreed upon by Bukhari and Muslim).

In fact, hate is one of the most dangerous concepts that speech conveys and delivers to the ears of others. Hate stands contrary to consent and love. Lexically, one may say "I hate something, or I do not like something out of hate". Grammatical derivatives include hate, hated, and hatred. Hate is associated with hardship, and hate means to be forced to do something against your will, thus you do it reluctantly. People also say I hate something, and something is much hated<sup>1</sup>.

Hate speech has had a powerful presence throughout human history and one of the risky elements that all humanity feels how dangerous and ferocious it is. Hate speech is also a major driver of clash of civilizations. It is also one of the effective tools for mobilization of people, armies and trigger their emotions resulting in wars, unrest, and animosity that lead to aggression, without right, and bloodshed; being the first sin committed by one of the children of Adam, when Allah Almighty brought them down to Earth.

## What Is Hate Speech?

Reaching a comprehensive definition of “hate speech” may seem difficult and complicated, given that “hate speech” includes diverse concepts related to means of communications (linguistic means, elements of sound, body language, and visual elements). Differences in this definition may rest on the institution that defines it on the one hand, and the context in which this term is used on the other hand.

Perhaps, the most comprehensive linguistic definition is that “hate speech” is a phenomenon that involves a subtle interaction that takes place between the communication intent and the communicative reception. This interaction takes place on semantic level, that is, between the intended implicit meaning and the perceived or interpreted meaning, along with its connotations to the receiver.

Rarely do the implied and the interpreted meanings match each other and hence, they become a source of misunderstanding, not only on the semantic level, but also on the relational level. Thus, hate speech becomes an attribute given to any statement, speech or conversation that couches hate.<sup>2</sup>

All people feel that hate speech has adverse effects, but they are not able to give it a clear and thorough definition; such people believe that hate speech threatens international peace, social cohesion, lack of tolerance and harmony in any nation, state, or world where it is rampant. This is true because hate speech is always raises controversy regarding the defining lines between hate speech and the freedom of expression, which prioritizes one’s right to express feelings about situations, people, and countries. That is why states came together to provide a clear definition of hate speech. The definition of hate speech was covered in the United Nations Strategy in 2019. it defines “Hate speech” as “any type of verbal, written, or behavioral communication that attacks or uses

derogatory or discriminatory language with reference to a person or group on the basis of identity; in other words, on the basis of religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, national origin, sex, or some other determinants of identity.”<sup>3</sup>

However, this definition does not indicate that the concept has been agreed upon and that the controversy over the definition of “hate speech” has been resolved. “Hate speech” is a thorny and ambiguous concept because it is broad and, hence, easy to manipulate. Therefore, UNESCO in 2015 used narrow concepts, such as dangerous speech and speech of fear to focus on the ability of speech to cause harm and drag to violent consequences.<sup>4</sup>

Hate speech can be defined as any behavior that openly incites violence or hate against a group of people, or an individual on the basis of race, color, religion, descent, and national or ethnic origin.<sup>5</sup>

Many countries have recently rushed to enact laws to curb hate speech and counter it by legitimate means, including laying out educational, media and guidelines programs in an effort to stem hate speech, out of the realization of its consequences in any society and the grave repercussions that it might cause when it becomes part of people’s behavior.

A significant number of international agreements and global human rights’ institutions have been established to address hate speech, discrimination among people. These agreements include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention for the Prevention of the Crime of Genocide in 1948. Further steps followed including, the Statute of the International Criminal Court and other international agreements that seek to limit hate speech and minimize its effects.<sup>6</sup>

## Human Values and Hate Speech

Noble human and religious values stand firm against hate speech, because the human being with instinctive tendency for benevolence, pursuit of perfection, and beauty runs counter natural inborn inclination Allah Almighty has endowed people with does not befit the incitement of hatred among people. For this reason, Islam affirms this communicative and noble meaning in the clearest, most accurate expression in explaining the wisdom of creation and life, as revealed by Allah Almighty:

(O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Surely, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware] Surah al-Mumtahina,

verse: 13); and (And speak to people good (words) Surah al-Baqarah, verse: 83).

Speaking good words while communicating with all people of different religions, sects and races is a religious requirement, a great good character that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) turned into action. Therefore, the Prophet decided to accept any effort, work, and behavior that serves justice, helps out vulnerable people, and rights a wrong, even if that meant forging an alliance between Muslim and non-Muslim nations. Hilf Al-Fudul (League of the Virtuous) is a good case in point, about which the Prophet said: “I witnessed an alliance in the house of Ibn Jadaan that was more beloved to me than a herd of expensive red camels. If I were called to do it now in the time of Islam, I would



respond.” Hilf Al-Fudulis was one of the four Quraysh alliances that Prophet Mohammed (ﷺ) witnessed before his Prophethood when he was twenty years old, one month after the end of Harb Al Fijar (Sacriligious War) between Kinana and Qais Ailan. Banu Hashim, Banu Taim and Banu Zahra agreed to it, where they pledged that: (No one should remain wronged in Makkah without having his grievance addressed”.<sup>7</sup>

Hate speech contravenes the essential value of human being in life; which is the value with which Allah has

honored all human beings. (We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea, and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with (definite) preference.) Surah al-Isra, verse:70).

By realizing human dignity, all higher values of goodness, beauty, honesty, justice, fraternity, and equality can be achieved. Creativity in life then comes to fruition along with the achievement of good for all people.

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## Drivers of Hate Speech

Many factors trigger hate speech and bring it about in the human context. The factors and drivers of hate speech are multifold. Combined, they all drive hate speech to creep and spread in societies. Hate speech does not occur in a vacuum, but rather has its various causes and circumstances that are subdivided into social, cultural, historical, and psychological drivers. Here are some of the key factors for the spread of hate speech:

### First: Radical Reading of Religious Concepts

Under the cloak of Islam, extremist and terrorist groups adopt certain concepts for their actions regarding the relationship of the Muslim with non-Muslims. They start from a vision that the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is principally one of war, conflict, hate and perpetual hostility. Such a relationship does not change, they argue, and the basic principle, when it comes to unbelievers is that the blood, honor, property and their territories is permissible. This extremist concept of such relationships is one of the greatest drivers of hate speech that perpetuates this tense relationship between them and their opponents. The animosity is not limited to their relationship with non-Muslims, but also extends to their opponents, including those who believe in the same religion. They view the world as divided into two worlds; a world of faith in which there is no hypocrisy and a world of disbelief in which there is no faith. This is the rule adopted by the leader of contemporary extremism and terrorism, Osama bin Laden, in his notorious videotapes in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Accordingly, the Al-Qaeda's affiliates and followers, such as Daesh and other militant groups, believe in the permissibility of killing their opponents, and generalize their takfiri and hate narrative to those who disagree with their ideology or religious

orientations. Taken together, such mindset generated terrorist acts inside and outside Muslim countries. Such speeches also introduced a new mindset for those affiliated with such groups, deriving them to kill their relatives, parents and next-of-kin, let alone non-relatives.

On examining the texts of the Holy Quran and the teachings of Sunnah, we find that they favor a relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims based on peace, communication, and cooperation rather than on war and fighting. The essential principle of the sanctity of human blood of all ethnicities, races, genders, and religions cannot be violated without a legitimate and legal justification. Being a non-Muslim does not give a license to for a transgression, oppression, killing or other types of harm.

In substantiating this great rule, Ibn Taymiyyah explains that (the sanctity of human life is protected and shall not be killed except by right. Killing for the mere disbelief is not one of the matters agreed upon by the previous divine religions, nor through the different phases of the Sharia law, such as killing for retribution, as something agreed upon by the divine religions and common sense. It was not permissible to kill disbelievers in the beginning of Islam, in view of the original sanctity of human life, and Allah prohibited the believers from fighting the disbeliever. Such people are very much like the Copt who was killed by Prophet Moses and the unbeliever whom the call to Islam has not yet reached in our time or in a better case. Moses considered that such an act is a sin in this world and the hereafter, although the killing was quasi-intentional murder or a purely accidental murder and was not essentially intentional).<sup>8</sup>

### Second: Amplification of the clash of Civilizations

Conflict ideology is based on the assertion that the future of humanity tends towards clash of civilizations and rivalry

of identities among people. This makes it necessary, according to view, to look inward and get prepared for a clash of civilizations that disregards the common human coexistence. Obviously, the protagonists of conflict vision motivate their followers to view the other with hate, suspicion and urge them to brace for confrontation whenever and wherever possible. This sets the stage for the spread of hate speech at the global level.

“Since it was first introduced by Bernard Lewis, the concept of the clash of civilizations has been characterized by an openly racist and even flagrant ethnic ideology, targeting a specific race, namely, the Arabs. Because the Arabs are the ones who spearheaded the spread of Islam, and believed to be the crux of the problem. In the early stages, Mr. Lewis’s call fell on deaf ears, due to the fact that the global capitalism in the sixties, was preoccupied with countering communism and socialism in general. The capitalist world worked hard to foment that ideological warfare through its media and intelligence agencies”.<sup>9</sup>

This conflict mentality prompted all global fundamentalists in all countries to assert their presence on the global stage, and convinced their followers that conflict is inevitable. That is why the promotion of hate speech was one of the effective tools used by all Eastern and Western fundamentalist attitudes to mobilize, attract followers and recruit young people to join such trends, waiting for the moment to ignite the spark of global conflict that these groups drum up for at all times.

### Third: The Virtual World and Hate Speech

Cyberspace provides an ideal environment for the spread of hate speech because everyone, regardless of their ideological affiliations, can openly exchange ideas with high level of freedom, even if these ideas are extremist and violent. Therefore, extremists of all backgrounds take the global network as an ideal means to spread hate speech, extremism and terrorism. They avail themselves of the opportunity provided by the global network to spread hate speech, extremism and terrorism. They do this by anonymous and encrypted identifications that allow hate speech proponents to use means that enable them to evade legal prosecution and punishment despite the great efforts exerted to restrict hate speech, extremism, and terrorism online.

The danger of the global network in spreading hate speech

lies in the diverse categories of users, ease of access, shaping their ideas, and attitudes, particularly children and youngsters, who are easily influenced and manipulated, and the huge impact that hate speech perpetrators can have. In the absence of parental control, young people fall prey to such hostile speeches, which turn youth into time bombs that carry out the extremists’ agendas and ideologies. They fall victim to such infiltrators, who sneak into their minds by using the means of mass means that use various methods of influence, mobilization and polarization.

“The use of information and communication technology for immoral actions will lead to undermining the structure of the international community, threatening the key pillars of peace and security, not to mention the harm caused by the spread of hate speech in light of the lack of international regulation of the internet. The lack of international standards that define hate speech and the use of the Internet to impose control between countries aggravate the situation.”<sup>10</sup>

In this connection, a research study conducted by a group of Indian researchers confirmed that hate speech content spreads on a wider scale, and at a faster rate than any other content. A research study analyzing 263 million [online] discussions in the UK, the United States, between 2019 and 2021, found that online hate speech increased by 20% during COVID-19 pandemic. It also found a significant increase in the rate of online hate speech during controversial or polarizing events, such as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) demonstrations in United States in June 2020.<sup>11</sup>

Social networking sites have allowed extremist ideologies to have a massive presence across all social networks. Each person with an extremist ideology fights against someone with a counter-extremist ideology. Each ideologue aims to attract like-minded people. “Human nature, as confirmed by the theory of intellectual dissonance of Leon Singer, always seeks intellectual compatibility and searches for everything that is compatible with its views and beliefs in order to reduce the situations of disharmony that occur to any contradictory opinions).<sup>12</sup>

### Fourth: Lack of Tolerance

Hate speech arises in an atmosphere where there is no room for tolerance, communication, and dialogue. If tolerance is missing and poor, hostile, racist, and sectarian speeches



arise, tearing society apart and bringing it to a permanent state of belligerency, animosity and conflict. Following the events of the Arab revolts, we have noticed that the principle of tolerance was missing, or merely poor, and so people fell back on hate speech. Such circumstances resulted in many tragedies, and the aftermath of the ripple effect is still much felt in the countries that were heavily impacted to date. When people use the principle of force instead of partnership, and that of hostility and aggression instead of consultation, dialogue, and effective communication, the consequences are always unfortunate. Principles of tolerance and dialogue are fundamental in the teachings of Islam. This is best revealed in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

(O mankind! fear your Lord Who created you from one soul, and created from it its mate, and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah—in Whose Name you ask one another—and family ties. Surely Allah is ever Watchful over you, an Observer] Surah an-Nissa, verse: 1.)

The Holy Quran calls on all people to remember the origin of their creation, and how over the course of time they diverged into different peoples and tribes, and that the true dignity of man is judged according to how someone is distant from, or close to, piety and the values of truth, justice and faith.

Tolerance is one of the commonly used concepts today. In cultural, social, and religious contexts. It describes attitudes, practices and trends that are characterized by respect for the others, rejection of extremism and violence, and acceptance of others who differ in thought, belief and position. In other words, tolerance is the acceptance of the different other, whether the difference is in religion, race, politics or culture, and recognizing him/her as equal in Canada.<sup>13</sup>

Prophet Mohammed, (peace be upon him), migrated to Madina, where people were adopting different religions, including polytheism, Judaism, and others. The first thing he did was the writing of The Charter of Madina, the paramount covenant of tolerance in history. In this respect, Ibn Isaac said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) wrote a prescript to be used by the Muhajirun and the Ansar, in which he accepted the Jews and allowed them to practice their religion, committing them to certain terms and conditions, rights and duties:

*In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful: This*

*prescript is from Mohammed, the Prophet and Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), to the believers and Muslims from Quraysh and the people of Madina and all those who followed, joined, and laboured with them. They shall constitute one umma among other people. The emigrants of the Quraysh, according to their former condition, shall pay the blood money (compensation for the shedding of blood) with their number, and each group shall redeem their prisoners with kindness common among them. Banu Auf, according to their former condition, shall pay the blood money within their number, and each sub-group shall redeem its prisoners with kindness common among the believers.<sup>14</sup>*

This prophetic document chartered an approach for the people regarding the importance of agreement on common grounds and contracting on social peace and tolerance. For this reason, the highest mark of prophetic tolerance was not coercing people into religion, as it is clearly spelled out by Allah the Almighty: (There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) the religion, the right course has become distinct from the wrong. So, whoever disbelieves in the taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.) surah al-Baqarah, verse:256.)

Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Jawziyyah, explains that anyone reading the biography of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) clearly understands that he never forced his religion on anyone, and that he only fought back those who fought him off. For years, Prophet Muhammad did not start a fight with the others of different religions until they first started fighting him. The Prophet did not fight off those who made a truce with him so long as they honored such a truce. Likewise, when Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) made a truce with Quraysh for ten years, he did not start fighting off with them until they first broke the covenant and started fighting him. He invaded them in their homes only after they invaded him, as they did in the Battle of Uhud, the Battle of the Trench, and the Battle of Badr, when they came to fight him off. And, had they turned away from him, he wouldn't have fought them back. Simply put, Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) did not oblige anyone to convert to his religion at all, rather people entered his religion willingly and voluntarily.<sup>15</sup>

Tolerance is not an ideological luxury. It is a prerequisite

for creating an open society that believes in pluralism and respecting the other. It is viewed as a dialogue-enrichment factor rather than a threat to identity. The boundaries of tolerance start when the law is strong, honored and enforced, and when individuals feel they are free from the fear, compulsion, and exploitation.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Fifth: Racial supremacy and Supremacism**

One of the major drivers and factors influencing the spread of hate speech is the belief that a group or race is superior to others and the highest in the scale of human history and hierarchy, which is referred to in global circles as hate groups or the white supremacy from which Nazism was born. Nazis see themselves different on an evolutionary scale compared with other human races. It is this superior mindset and arrogant view that generate a state of hate and contempt for everyone who is different from their race. Nazis even believe that the distinction between them and other human beings is the inalienable right they are endowed with by nature. Eventually, supremacy leads to contempt, hostility, and motivation to eliminate the other and permit all acts of abuse against the other without any deterrent moral restriction.

Hate groups spread widely in the global network and use the network to publicize their rhetoric and justify it as natural right. Hate groups exercise this behavior against the other, whether such otherness is religious or ethnic. One key example is racism against blacks who suffer in many countries from racial discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization that places them in an inferior social rank.

#### **Sixth: Bigotry**

The triangle of violence, aggression and bigotry constitutes an ideology of historical challenges facing human societies and human intellect in the modern time. Today, the global political and social life is witnessing terrible waves of intolerance in various political, social, and cultural manifestations. The Arab social and cultural scene is almost hardly devoid of sad images of the reality of intolerance and violence that flare up in the depth of political, religious, and social life.<sup>17</sup>

Bigotry - whether for a sect, party, or ideology - and the exaggeration of loyalty that deviates from the normal and moderate situation are conducive for the generation of hate speech and aggression. Human history witnessed all types of warfare, unrest and horrendous unease that claimed many innocent lives due to tribal, factional,

sectarian, denominational and ethnic intolerance. Bigoted people are blind and can only see themselves and their close affiliates. By monopolizing truth for themselves and affiliates, they exclude the other, looking at each opponent with contempt and superiority. With such malpractices, wars flare up between fanatics without any deterrence of reason or conscience.

One of the forms of bigotry that persists is the doctrinal juristic bigotry that triggers divisions, hatred, and animosity among people, despite the fact that it was more prevalent in the past compared to the present time. Yaqt al-Hamawi mentioned in his book "Mu'jam al-Buldan" the events of the city of Ray when he passed by in 617 AH: "The people of the city were divided into three sects: Shafi'is, who were the minority, Hanafis, who were the majority, and Shia, who were the vast majority. Intolerance erupted between Sunnis and Shia, and the Hanafis and Shafi'is united against them. Wars broke out between them until there were no Shia left. When exterminated, intolerance arose between Hanafis and Shafi'is, and wars broke out between them. The Shafi'is won all of these battles despite being a small minority. The people of Rustaq, who were Hanafis, used to come to the city armed with their weapons to help the people of their sect, but this did not save them from being killed. Only those who concealed their beliefs remained between the Shia and Hanafis. I found all their homes built under the ground, with paths leading to their homes extremely dark and difficult to pass through. Had it not been for that, no one would have survived."<sup>18</sup>

The pre-Islamic Arabic literature excelled in describing the concept of intolerance and highlighting its social aspects as expressed in the following [paraphrased] line of poetry:

Truly, I'm no more than part of Ghuzayyeh [my clan]; if they do wrong, I will do wrong, and if they follow the right path, I will do so.

Intolerance takes the form of doctrinal, religious, or political extremism characterized by a high degree of parochialism and rigidity. In this context, the will to dominate overpowers the will to persuade. Intolerance as a concept emerged alongside the idea of political pluralism and came along with the concept of tolerance that, in fact, contradicts with intolerance.<sup>19</sup>

The concept of intolerance is one of the complex concepts widely spread in the literature of human and social sciences. There are various and diverse forms





of intolerance, including racial, cultural, religious, and sectarian intolerance. Intolerant people in the past were referred to as “priests of the gods” who were gripped by a special type of hallucination, particularly when they stabbed their bodies with knives to the point of bleeding.<sup>20</sup>

Several factors can contribute to the formation of feelings of intolerance, including rivalry, religious ideas, fear of strangers, and ultra-nationalism. Intolerance can arise when a group fears that another group’s rivalry will undermine their status, benefits, political power, or opportunities, along with deep-seated resentment and hatred towards them. Intolerant people are known for their authoritarianism and hostility to others, and for having no empathy, no belief in destiny. They are also known for their violent and aggressive worldview, lack of imagination, and rigid thought.<sup>21</sup>

The established religious concepts introduced by Prophet Mohammed (ﷺ) formed the justification for the rejection of intolerance. Although he believed that he was sent by Allah and possessed absolute and irrefutable truth, the calls of the Holy Quran were calls of mercy for people without compulsion or aggression. (And say, the truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve.) (18:29). (Perhaps you would kill yourself with grief that they are not accepting this message [O Muhammad], out of sorrow, if they do not believe in it.) (18:6). (You are not over them a controller.) (88:22). (Do you then compel people, until they become believers?) (10:99).

This indicates that the mission of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was one of conveying the message without coercion, and one of mercy and guidance without coercion or offense. (So, We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], over them as a guardian, but only as a bringer of good tidings and a warner.) (42:48). The well-guided caliphs and imams throughout history followed suit and unanimously agreed to shun intolerance in their schools of thought and to hold fast to the truth even if it contradicted their own opinions. However, intolerance arises from followers who support their own schools and divide people according to their preferences, which leads to sectarian strife and conflicts, ignoring the principles upon which their schools of thought were founded, such as tolerance, respect for differences, avoiding extremism, and accepting those who disagree with them in matters of knowledge and action.

### Seventh: Jealousy

Psychological factors have a significant impact on one's

behavior and interactions with others. Psychological factors often dictate how a person behaves and interacts with others. Jealousy is one such factor that can lead to hateful speech with others, especially when a person feels limited in his abilities, has not achieved a desired social status, or has not acquired the wealth he desires. This is reflected in his behavior towards others with aggression, hatred, and jealousy.

“Many researchers and specialists have tried to identify the main causes of this phenomenon and have found that one of the most important causes is jealousy. Jealousy may not always be pathological, but some people feel discomforted and confused when someone else exceeds them in fame, ideas, knowledge, or expertise, which prompts them to write negatively and hateful about him, out of jealousy. That is why we find many negative comments, insults, and hate speech directed towards celebrities and influential figures on social media. As soon as someone posts a personal photo, he is assailed with offensive comments, personal attacks, and even attacks on their families.”<sup>22</sup>

### Eighth: Ideology factor

Intellectual, political, and religious ideologies often contain a significant amount of hate speech directed towards others, based on the premise that these ideologies are mostly characterized by intellectual and moral purity, whether they are political, partisan, or sectarian. They tend to glorify the self and negate the other directly.

Because ideologies thrive on attracting followers, they raise their followers to absolute, violent and aggressive loyalty to the private domain, and they disassociate from and show enmity towards those who oppose their private ideology. Therefore, these ideologies contribute directly to the spread of hate speech, whether in their literary and intellectual curricula or in their dealings with media, cultural, and political landscapes. The effects of this discourse particularly appear on social media because it is the ideal platform for promoting ideas, igniting conflicts, and generalizing hate speech towards opponents and creating sharp polarizations. Perhaps ideologies in their various forms have used hate speech for the moral assassination of opponents and sustainment of the principle of loyalty to the private domain by denying and stigmatizing the other.

## Effects of Hate Speech

Undoubtedly, hate speech has significant effects on both individuals and society as a whole and on the security and social stability of countries. These effects can be psychological or physical and can be diverse and dangerous. Hate speech reinforces the psychological and social security of individuals, while undermining their right to disagreement and sense of being. Among the most prominent effects of hate speech are the following:

### First: Hate Speech Undermines Peaceful Coexistence

One of the most important things that societies strive for is peaceful and cooperative living that brings security, compassion, and cooperation to the community, far from any factors that affect the cohesion and peace of the community. Hate speech, on the other hand, leads to the stimulation of enmity and hatred among members of the same community, which imposes many political, economic, and security costs on the society and the state. Therefore, "hate speech is one of the biggest threats to social peace, as it causes division within the community that can even lead to conflict among its members. In recent years, with the spread of various media and the rarity of constructive media discourse, some of these media outlets have been competing with each other in spreading hate speech among members of the same community by spreading lies, rumors, and defaming certain countries, tribes, groups, and classes, and working to undermine the social fabric of societies and spread hatred and animosity."<sup>23</sup>

### Second: Psychological and Physical Harm Resulting from Hate Speech

Individuals who are subjected to various forms of hate speech, including verbal, implied, and symbolic, may experience psychological pressure that can develop into chronic mental and physical illnesses. These individuals are subjected to racism, bullying, and discrimination, which can lead to psychological and physical damage.

"One of the most surprising things is that experts have found that those who practice intolerance and hatred are also at risk. For example, research conducted by the American psychologist Jordan B. Leitner found a clear correlation between explicit racial bias among whites and rates of cardiovascular disease-related deaths. Explicit bias refers to conscious bias that is sometimes openly expressed, whereas implicit bias is unconscious and detected indirectly. Leitner's data actually indicate that

living in a racially hostile society is linked to increased rates of deaths from heart and vascular disease for both the group targeted by this bias, such as Blacks, and the group that leads to bias.

In the journal of psychological sciences, "Leitner" and his colleagues at the University of California pointed out that death rates from cardiovascular disease are more common in communities where whites exhibit more explicit bias. Both blacks and whites showed increased mortality rates, but the relationship was stronger for blacks. While the correlation does not prove causation, clinical psychologist "Vickie M. Mays" and her colleagues at the University of California, Los Angeles, hypothesized that the experience of discrimination based on race could lead to a series of physiological incidents, such as high blood pressure and heart rate, which ultimately increase the risk of death."<sup>24</sup>

Hate speech can cause targets to lose their lives. The total numbers of hate crime victims of some forms of prejudice, and the average number of victims per crime in 2019, according to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), are as follows:<sup>25</sup>

Classification	Total Victims	Average of victims per violent attack	Average of victims per threat
Racism and Xenophobia	1550	2.03	1.85
Prejudice against Muslims	558	1.51	2.60
Prejudice against Christians	268	1.59	2.58
Anti-Semitism	208	1.48	1.3
Gender bias	136	1.98	2.36
Prejudice against people with Disabilities	21	1.6	2.0

### Third: Desecration of holy sites and igniting the spark of Conflicts:

One of the destructive effects of hate speech is that it emboldens extremists to violate the sanctities of others, insult and humiliate them, especially those sanctities



that millions, if not billions, of people hold in high esteem. This can lead to the outbreak of conflicts and prompt extremists and terrorists to carry out terrorist plots that may harm innocent people. Allah has prohibited in the Quran the reviling of other people's gods, so that they do not revile Allah out of ignorance. Allah says, "And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus, We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do." (6: 108). While their beliefs may be considered misguided, Allah in the Holy Quran has prohibited reviling their gods due to the great harm that results from it and, most significantly, reviling Allah Almighty.

One of the consequences of racist movements that incite hatred and violence in Western countries is shown in their extremists' behavior of burning the Holy Quran, with the media covering these crimes that blatantly incite hatred and violence. The latest incident was the burning of the Holy Quran in Sweden. In August 2020, violent protests erupted in Malmo after a similar act provoked Muslims in various parts of Sweden, prompting a Swedish court to ban Balodan from entering the country for two years. In Oslo, Norway, clashes broke out between right-wing extremist protesters and others opposed to hate speech and racism. In the same year, several European countries thwarted plans led by the far-right extremist leader to burn copies of the Holy Quran.

These incidents, which are not limited to a particular place or book, have become rampant with the development of technology and the Internet. In the United States, the extremist pastor Terry Jones threatened to burn a copy of the Holy Quran in 2010 to mark the anniversary of September 11 terrorist attacks that were carried out by Al-Qaeda in the United States. From time to time, incidents occur in which copies of the Bible are burned by some

political groups as a form of protest or to stir up the anger of conservatives.

Similarly, a couple of homosexuals burned a copy of the Bible to provoke a group of conservative Christians in the US state of Tennessee. In 2020 during the "Black Lives Matter" protests, a video emerged of a group of protesters in the city of Portland, Oregon burning copies of the Bible.<sup>26</sup> When such incidents occur in the West, such as the heinous act of burning the Holy Quran in Sweden, which occurred with a permission from the Swedish government, many people isolate the incident from the historical context that generated it, and similar phenomena, in the West. Therefore, understanding the situation is required in order to grasp its real cause and driving force, which ultimately enables us to understand the incident.

Such incidents, indeed, do not happen without reason, but are rather the immediate corollary of some hidden forces that cause them to happen and strive to escalate them day by day in the context of a conflictual vision in which many people around the world preach instability, and try to ignite racial and sectarian conflict, and reinforce the idea of xenophobia and attack foreigners in order to preserve social values - as they claim. This undoubtedly contradicts international treaties, moral values, and is a violation of the resolutions that some western countries are trying to promote, advocate and generalize to people, while some governments and right-wing political trends sponsor hate speech towards foreigners. Muslims residing in the West and Black people have received the largest share of hate speech that has led extremists of these right-wing groups to provoke Muslims by violating their most sacred sanctities, which is the Holy Book of Allah. Certainly, this will produce undesirable reactions, incite conflict, and stimulate the terrorists and extremists' mentality to find justifications for committing disgraceful terrorist acts that target innocent people who have no connection with this conflict.

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## How to Confront Hate Speech?

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In the past, it has been found that hate speech is destructive and dangerous to social and intellectual peace and security, and negatively affects the quality of life and relationships with others, regardless of the origin of this speech. It stimulates emotions to a state of hostility and strife that leads to political and social turmoil. Therefore, all must come together to find solutions to address and confront hate speech at the educational, media, political, and intellectual spheres through programs and projects in

which everyone participates. Among the most important things to mention in dealing with this speech are the following:

### First: Legal handling

To reduce hate speech, it is necessary to look at the legislation and laws that prohibit this type of speech in societies, for this speech jeopardizes national security and cohesion of communities. For example, in the United

States, under the First Article of the Constitution, hate speech, no matter how extreme it may be, is guaranteed under the freedom of expression clause. However, it is important to note that if hate speech consists of an explicit and clear threat directed at an individual, group, or entity, it becomes a crime rather than hate speech. In the United Kingdom, there is a specific legal provision that incriminates hate speech and racial discrimination.<sup>27</sup>

One of the major problems facing the handling of hate speech is its close and inextricable connection to the freedom of expression, in which case the two concepts overlap when extremists and instigators exploit freedom of expression to disseminate hate. That is why the two concepts are intertwined when hate speech turns into a crime. However, there is a lack of awareness of the effect of hate speech on the escalation of ideas that makes a mere expression a crime in itself, whether it has turned into a real crime or not. Therefore, some countries that expand the concept of freedom of expression implicitly condone hate speech, incitement, and extremism, especially when extremists exploit that democratic atmosphere to pass their loaded messages through the media and other means, relying on freedom of expression. As a result, these extremists have contributed to the escalation of violent, extremist, and hateful speech towards countries or societies, motivating young people to adopt terrorist, extremist, and violent methods.

Legal leverage is effective in combating any phenomenon, whether it is intellectual or physical. Effective also is the legal regulation that clearly criminalizes hate speech, especially that which incites violence or aggression against others by killing them, hurting them, exhausting them mentally or psychologically, or discriminating against them based on gender, race, country, or religion. Also rejected is the speech that attempts to undermine and humiliate people, whether directed towards a group, entity, individuals, or entities which might turn into a criminal behavior that threatens social security and the safety of people.

Therefore, enacting clear laws that first define hate speech with a comprehensive and prohibitive definition, and then establishing precise boundaries that make it unambiguous, and formulating it in clear articles with diverse punishments is a useful way to control and confront hate speech.

**Second:** Promotion of Moderate and tolerant Discourse

As we have previously mentioned, religious extremism and intolerance in holding religious concepts represent

the main causes of hate speech. This is because religious extremism and intolerance hold a psychological dimension that provokes others and even attacks them through excommunication, killing, bombing, and violence. The extremist understands the religious discourse in a specific way and employs it intellectually and politically to pass on his discourse to others, especially those who follow religious discourse without distinguishing between moderate discourse and extremist discourse. Therefore, advocates of violence, extremism, and hatred have realized that young men and women are attractable to their currents, parties, and groups.

Promoting a discourse of moderation based on tolerance, justice, good, peace, communication, and dialogue and educating young people to think critically about religious concepts is prerequisite. It is important to teach youngsters not to blindly trust any idea, and to distinguish between matters of certainty and those of opinion and controversy. Appreciating disagreement in religious and jurisprudential issues, and avoiding intolerance towards opinions, ideas, and individuals are the most appropriate ways to reduce the intensity of hate speech in religious concepts.

The role of scholars and media in promoting the discourse of tolerance, moderation, justice, and centrism is more crucial than ever in a time whereby various discourses are reviving extremism and radicalism in all their forms. This is meant to protect the younger generation from the pitfalls of ideas that lead them to the swamps of harmful discourses in all their forms.

“The religious tolerance value system preserves the holistic fundamentals that are essential for human life and applies equally to Muslims and non-Muslims. These are immutable rights their immutability can only be broken in certain legitimate conditions. Tolerance does not mean melting into the other, nor does it involve wiping out one’s identity or adopting the culture of others. Rather, it is a recognition of the right of others to live according to their chosen lifestyle and religious beliefs.”<sup>28</sup>

The advancement of values of religious and human tolerance in societies must be based on the following three principles:

**First:** Presenting the true vision of Islamic values in general and the values of tolerance in particular.

**Second:** Correcting the misconceptions others hold about the message of Islam, its ethics and values in dealing with different religions, diverse people and humanity as a whole.



**Third:** collective action by everyone to promote values of truth, good, justice, tolerance, and devise mechanisms that confront hate speech and discrimination.<sup>29</sup>

**Third: Active Contribution on Social Media Platforms**

Social media platforms have become a fertile ground for extremist and hate speeches of all kinds. They are so closely linked to people's daily lives that they shape the awareness and ideas of societies. Therefore, contributing to these platforms through scientific and media-based methods could undoubtedly help to contain hate speech and minimize its harmful effects.

Violent and terrorist groups find in social media platforms an ideal space to promote their ideas and courses of action. Therefore, confronting them in their ideal stronghold is important by laying siege to their ideas from a security, intellectual, and scientific perspective. Moderate and centrist people should take part in standing against these ideas through conscious dialogue and promoting messages of tolerance, moderation, and centrism.

**Fourth: Effective Dialogue in Confronting Hate Speech**

One of the advantages of civilized dialogue and

communication is to dampen the severity of extremist ideologies. Dialogue provides the appropriate atmosphere to refute and expose such ideologies, and to diversify the angles of vision of those who advocate violence and extremism on different issues. As such, it contributes to dampening the severity of extremism and clean minds from perilous ideas. It is established in cognitive psychology that every wrong behavior is born of a wrong ideology. The remedial treatment of ideologies contributes to the remedial treatment of wrong behaviors and leads to a view of moderation in perceptions and ideas.

"Dialogue among followers of religions or cultures is an important tool to avoid hate speech and incitement to violence, and the greatest support for societies to interact with and understand the other. The process of dialogue takes place when people from different religious and cultural backgrounds seek mutual understanding and respect, allowing each other to coexist peacefully despite the differences. Dialogue among followers of religions and cultures contributes to a qualitative shift from the stage of winning the argument and controlling the result to the stage of collective and comprehensive decision-making to achieve durable public interest."<sup>30</sup>



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