MEDIA MONITORING REPORT ON HATE SPEECH IN KOSOVO

WRITTEN BY
JETA REXHA

Funded by the European Union

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Reporting Diversity Network 2.0

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Introduction

The primary objective of this report which is part of a larger study covering the Western Balkans is to provide a comprehensive analysis of hate speech and disinformation narratives focusing on Kosovo. This report aims to identify patterns, examples, and underlying dynamics that shape the propagation of such harmful discourse. By exploring the actors and events that generate hate and disinformation narratives, understanding the messages disseminated, and analysing common targets, we seek to gain deeper insights into the socio-political landscape of the region.

Central to the investigation is the concept of narratives, which extends beyond explicit storytelling to encompass the implicit interpretation and meaning attributed to events and characters. These narratives serve as powerful tools in defining social norms, legitimising power structures, and perpetuating discrimination and extremism. Thus, the used approach acknowledges the pivotal role of narratives in shaping collective perceptions and behaviours.

This research adopts a broad sociological perspective on hate speech and propaganda, transcending narrow legal definitions to encompass a diverse range of personal and group characteristics. This analysis aims to uncover the multifaceted dynamics underlying hate narratives across various societal domains, shedding light on their origins, dissemination, and impact. Ultimately, this report seeks to provide insights that inform strategies to understand the layers and dynamics of hate speech and provide suggestions on how to combat hate speech and disinformation in the Western Balkans.

Methodological approach

This study aims to deepen the understanding of hate and discriminatory discourse (HDD) in Kosovo. It focuses on identifying patterns and instances of HDD. The research investigates the main sources and triggers of hate and disinformation, examining the specific ideas, messages, and common targets, with a focus on gender. It investigates how these narratives are produced and spread, the reactions they provoke, and explores strategies for prevention and response.

This study uses qualitative and quantitative analysis to provide evidence-based insights into hate and discriminatory discourse. TV channels, social media platforms and online portals were monitored from May 2022 until the end of December 2023.

For the purposes of this research, the sentiment analysis collected incidents were classified according to the methodology of George Washington University[1], which uses a scale from one to six to rate cases of hate speech:

1. **Disagreement** - Rhetoric including disagreeing with the idea at a mental level. Challenging groups' claims, ideas, and beliefs, or trying to change them.
2. **Negative actions** - Rhetoric, including negative nonviolent actions associated with the group.
3. **Negative character** - Rhetoric including non-violent characterisations and insults.
4. **Demonising and dehumanising** - Rhetoric including specifications of sub-human and superhuman characteristics of the targeted individual/group.
5. **Instigation of violence** - Rhetoric implies infliction of physical harm or aspirational physical harm.
6. **Death** - Rhetoric implies literal killing or elimination of a group.

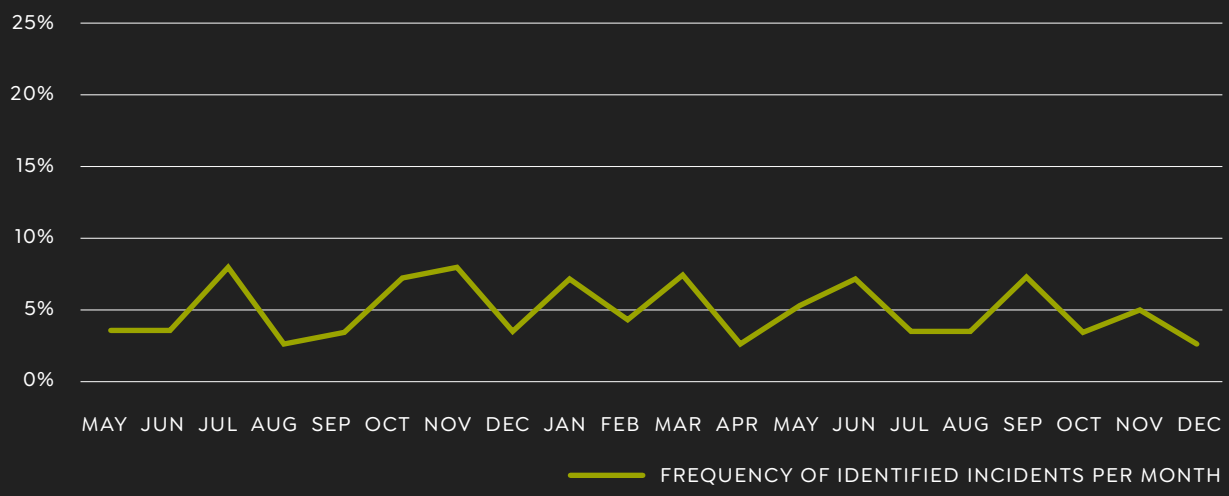
1. Bahador Babak, Kerchner Daniel, Bacon Leah, Menas Amanda, (2019), Monitoring Hate Speech in the US. Washington, DC: George Washington.

Main findings

From May 2022 to December 2023, Kosovo 2.0 diligently tracked instances of hate speech and divisive narratives in Kosovo, monitoring online media, social media, and TV debates. Since 2020 because of the pandemic and economicall challenges, there have been no printed newspapers in Kosovo so instead, online media was monitored[2]. Throughout this timeframe, 112 occurrences of hate speech were identified, averaging slightly under six incidents per month. The monitoring concentrated on identifying hate speech associated with gender/ sexuality, ethnic background, and religious beliefs. It is crucial to note that the scope of monitoring was not to report all possible incidents that took place in Kosovo. Instead, it was to focus on representative incidents that were especially pertinent based on the nature of the content, their reach and influence on public discourse, and the prominence of the individuals involved.

Based on the provided data, hate speech and divisive narratives in Kosovo are generated across various categories. Ethnic focus is significant, targeting minority groups like the Serbian and Roma communities, as well as ethnic Albanian individuals, particularly politicians and public figures. Gender is another major focus, with instances specifically directed against women.

Upon conducting quantitative analysis, no specific period stood out significantly with a higher frequency of these instances. However, slight increases were observed in hate speech during July and November of 2022, each accounting for 8.04% of the total instances identified throughout the year. Furthermore, no specific triggering event could be identified as a cause for the upsurge in hate speech and divisive narratives.

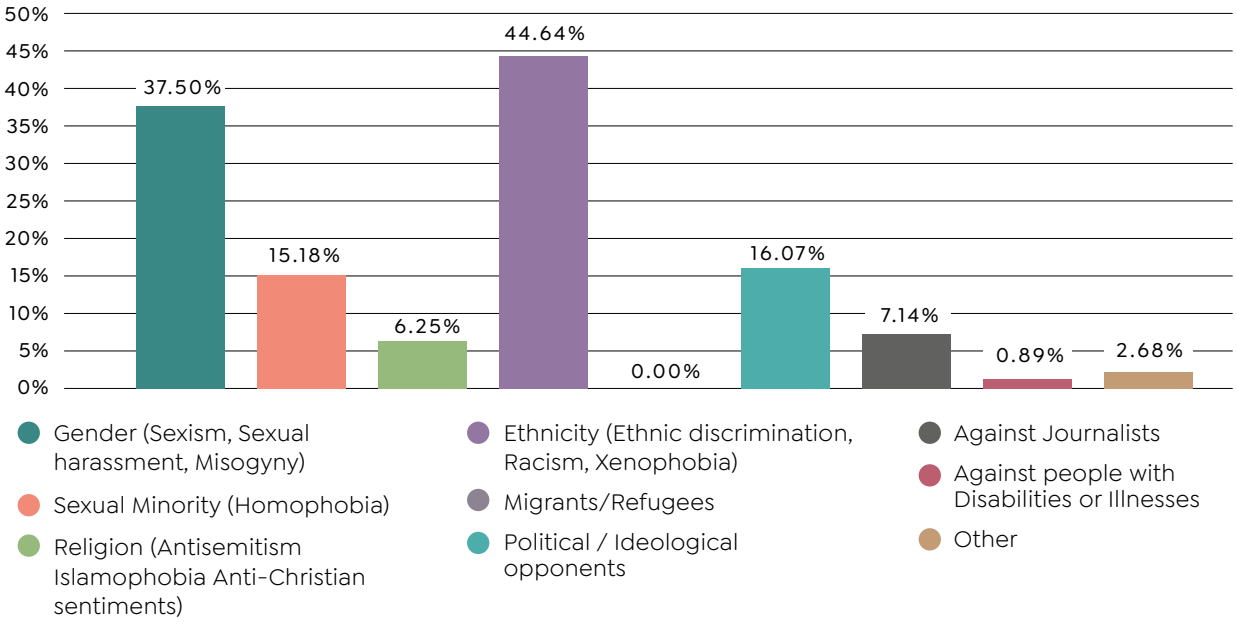


Graphs 1. Percentages of identified incidents per month

Most of the aforementioned incidents of hate speech and negative narratives exhibited an ethnic focus, constituting 44.64% of such cases in 2023. These instances were directed either explicitly against minority groups, as observed in cases targeting the Serbian and Roma communities, or more broadly against ethnic Albanian individuals, mostly politicians and public figures. In the latter instances, comparisons to minority groups were employed in a derogatory manner.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that instances of hate speech also prominently targeted gender, accounting for 37% of recorded instances. In all documented cases, these instances were directed specifically against women.

2. https://apnews.com/article/europe-kosovo-health-coronavirus-newspapers-7271839b973f67d3af6ddbf88a6f7fba



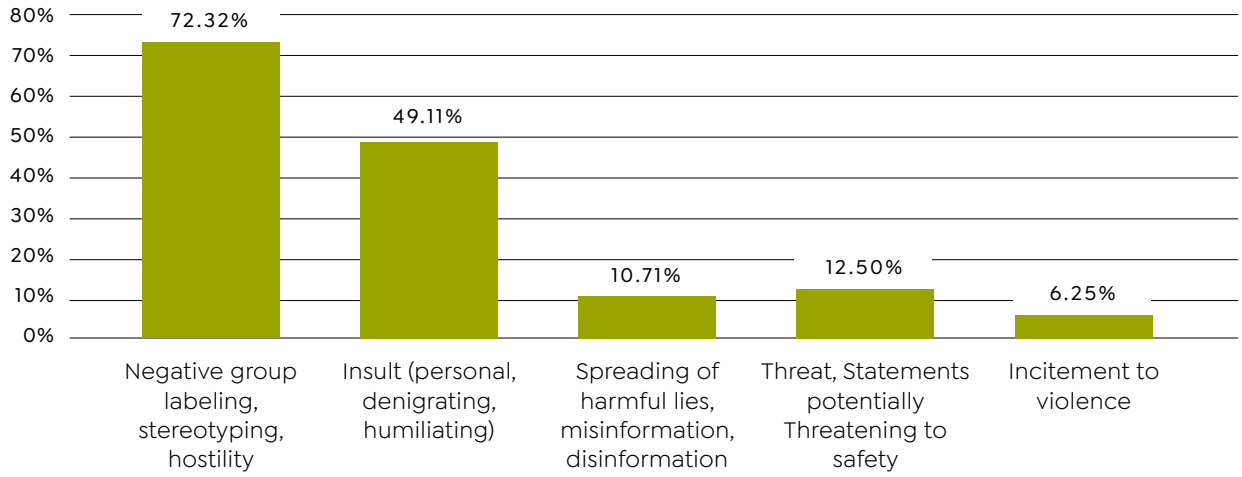
Graphs 2. Percentage of type of hate speech and negative narratives

In 70% of the recorded incidents, one type of hate speech was used, whereas in 30 other cases, multiple types of hate speech were employed simultaneously. For instance, cases of sexism and misogyny were overlapping with political/ideological types of attacks. Furthermore, instances of hate speech against sexual minorities were often coupled with sexist comments. The relationship matrix below illustrates these interconnected relations.

	Gender (Sexism, Sexual harassment, Misogyny)	Sexual Minority (Homophobia)	Religion (Antisemitism Islamophobia Anti-Christian sentiments)	Ethnicity (Ethnic discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia)	Migrants/ Refugees	Political/ Ideological opponents	Journalists	People with Disabilities or Illnesses	Other
Gender (Sexism, Sexual harassment, Misogyny)	42	4	0	6	0	8	2	0	1
Sexual Minority (Homophobia)	4	17	0	2	0	0	1	0	0
Religion (Antisemitism Islamophobia Anti-Christian sentiments)	0	0	7	0	0	2	0	0	1
Ethnicity (Ethnic discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia)	6	2	0	50	0	5	0	0	1
Migrants/ Refugees	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Political/ Ideological opponents	8	0	2	5	0	18	0	1	0
Journalists	2	1	0	0	0	2	8	0	0
People with Disabilities or Illnesses	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Other	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	3

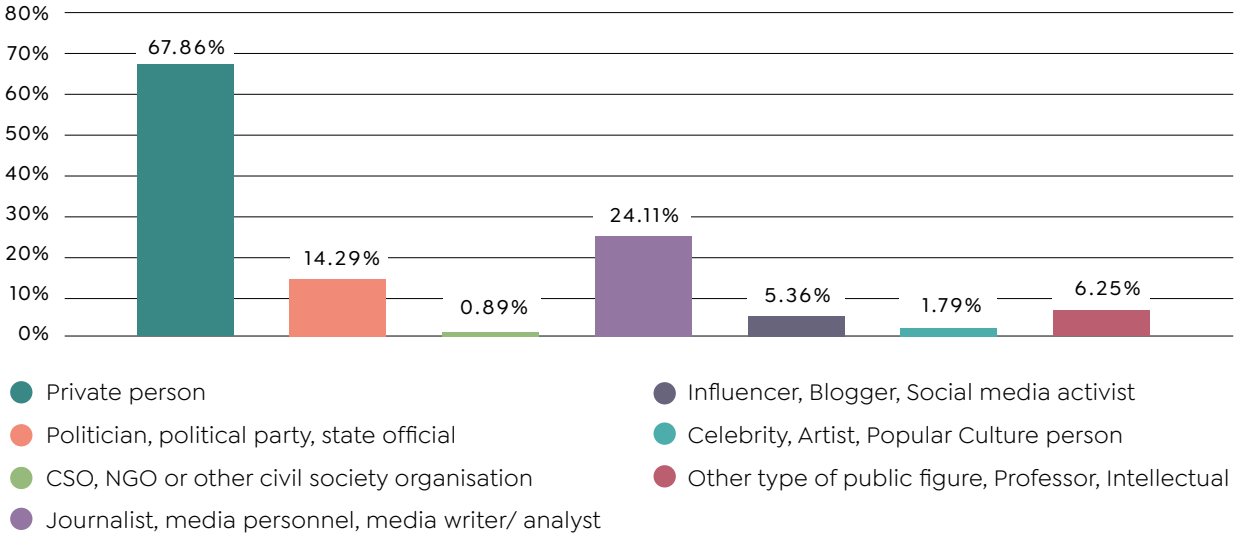
Graphs 3. Matrix of interconnected relations of the hate speech instances

Most hate speech instances are associated with negative group labelling or stereotyping, comprising approximately 72% of these incidents. Insults account for 49% of the cases, followed by 'threats and statements potentially threatening to safety' which make up 12% of the total.



Graphs 4. Percentage of type of negative content

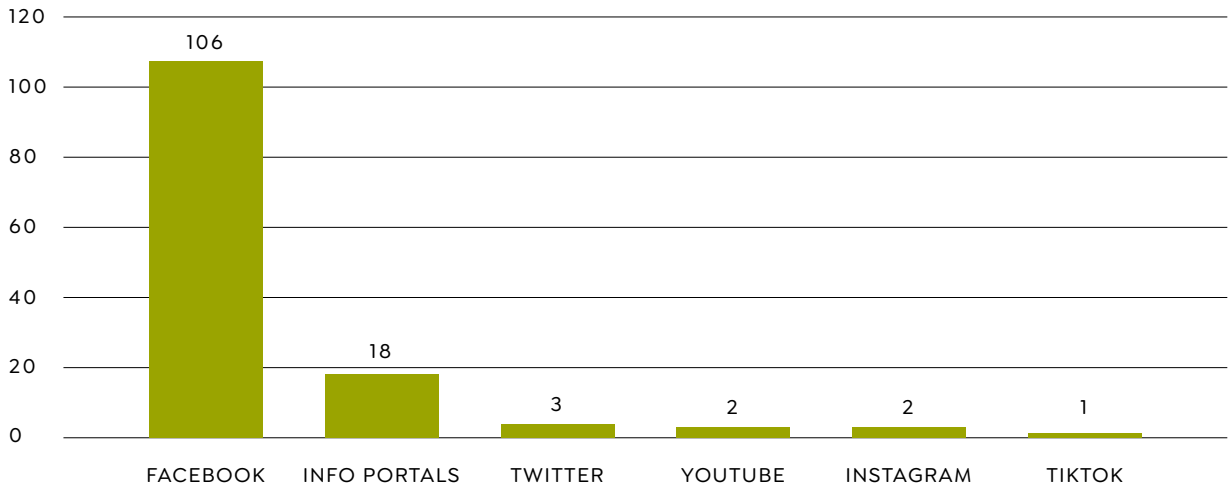
Moreover, the majority of these incidents were committed by private individuals, constituting 68% of the total occurrences. Journalists or media personnel were the second-largest group involved, contributing to 23% of the identified instances, followed by politicians, members of political parties and state officials with 15%.



Graphs 5. Percentage of the type of figure that commited the indicent

The monitoring process identified Facebook as the primary platform where hate speech incidents occurred, with 106 out of the total 112 cases recorded. During the monitoring period, Facebook is highlighted as the leading platform for hate speech occurrences, accounting for 106 out of the 112 total cases noted. This trend underlines the platform's role in the dissemination of hate speech, predominantly perpetrated by private individuals. These incidents were observed both on personal pages and on Facebook pages of news portals. Facebook remains the main information platform for a majority of citizens[3], and was therefore observed in greater detail than other sites. In contrast, incidents on alternative platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter were less frequent, totalling only 8 out of the 112.

3. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/4/facebook-turns-20-how-the-social-media-giant-grew-to-3-billion-users



Graphs 6. Frequency of the used platfom

Insults account for 22%, and harmful lies and misinformation make up 16% of the total. These instances often involve a combination of hate speech types, such as sexism and misogyny intertwined with hate speech targeting minority groups and political opponents.

The sub-narratives allow for a more nuanced understanding of how discrimination operates across different sectors of society, highlighting the unique challenges faced by each group. These sub-narratives underscore the interconnectedness of various forms of discrimination, showcasing how biases and prejudices in one area can influence or exacerbate inequalities in another. This approach not only enriches the report's analysis but also ensures that policy responses are comprehensive, sensitive to the diverse experiences of discrimination, and effective in fostering an inclusive and equitable society. Some of the examples mentioned reflect the most poignant events which opened bigger national debates.

Sub Narrative 1: Discrimination Against Ethnicity (Ethnic discrimination, Racism, Xenophobia) 44.60%

Events such as socio-political conflicts, economic disparities, and institutional biases serve as main generators. The main ideas disseminated revolve around victimisation, scapegoating, and the portrayal of specific ethnic groups as threats. Common targets include marginalised communities, with narratives often reinforcing stereotypes and deepening divisions.

The most recent case was at Banjska village in the North of Kosovo. On the morning of September 24th, Kosovo's Prime Minister, Albin Kurti, announced that around 3 a.m. the Kosovo Police were attacked in the village of Banjska, Zvečan, resulting in the death of one Kosovo Police officer and the injury of another. The Kosovo Police stated that the rapid response unit of the border police noticed that at the entrance of the village of Banjska, two heavy trucks (without license plates) had been positioned, blocking access to the village. Upon receiving this information, the law enforcement units of the Zvečan Police Station responded to the incident and dispatched three units to the location. Here, they encountered resistance and were fired upon from various positions, including the use of firearms, hand grenades, and explosives.[4]

The incident left three Serb fighters and a Kosovo police officer dead. The ongoing investigation aims to uncover the motives behind the attack, with Kosovo accusing Serbia of supporting the armed individuals[5].

Kosovo Online, a Serbian portal, released a statement prone to disseminating unverified and propagandistic information in alignment with the government of Serbia's official policy. This conduct contributes to the escalation of nationalism among Serbian citizens in Kosovo. Notably, the portal failed to disassociate from the inflammatory

4. https://sbunker.org/disinfo/the-attack-on-banjska-through-which-the-annexation-of-the-north-was-attempted/
5. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/state-war-residents-police-describe-heavy-battle-northern-kosovo-2023-09-27/

language used by Pošta Srbije, which denied the involvement of Albanian terrorists, while no response from the Kosovo Police or confirmation of damage or theft from the Banjska village post office has been provided.

"By this act of vandalism, the Albanian terrorists not only caused the temporary suspension of postal services in Banjska, but - inspired by the irresponsible and dangerous policy of Albin Kurti - consciously and deliberately continued to intimidate and destroy everything that is Serbian in Kosovo and Metohija - as well as by hindering the unhindered movement, work and daily life of all those who oppose the unreasonable policy of the temporary authorities in Pristina," the announcement states[6].

Other cases of ethnic discrimination also contribute to racial discrimination directed towards the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. For example, the online newspaper "Nacionale" recently reported on school dropout rates among children from these very communities[7]. The report highlighted instances of bullying and mistreatment faced by some children, but during an interview with the school director, specific questions about such cases and the staff's response were not asked. The director suggested that children may invent reasons for dropping out, but the journalist failed to inquire further for a more nuanced understanding. Despite indications of racist behaviour affecting these communities in the report, the journalist did not delve deeper into this potentially significant factor contributing to school dropout rates. Hate speech within media sources emerges not solely from the media's own instances of hate speech but also from their negligence in addressing and analysing the hate speech they broadcast, failing to provide the audience with a deeper understanding of the context.

Sub narrative 2: Discrimination Against Gender (Sexism, Sexual harassment, Misogyny) 37.50%

The other sub-narrative, centred on gender and sexism at 32.48%, key actors are misogynistic groups, online trolls, and sometimes public figures promoting regressive ideologies. Events such as high-profile cases of gender-based violence and discriminatory policies contribute to the narrative. Main ideas revolve around reinforcing traditional gender roles, victim-blaming, and undermining gender equality efforts.

The incidents of hate speech against gender, targeted a range of individuals and groups, including activists, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and women subjected to domestic violence. This indicates a broad spectrum of gender-based hate speech that affects diverse segments of society. The hate speech incidents included personal attacks and the use of derogatory terms aimed at dehumanising and belittling the targets. This suggests a highly personalised and aggressive nature of the hate speech in these incidents.

The figures committing these incidents varied from private individuals to media personnel and social media influencers. This diversity in the sources of hate speech points to a widespread issue that spans across different societal roles. The reported content primarily consisted of negative group labelling, stereotyping, and hostility. This highlights a common tactic in hate speech that generalises and negatively portrays entire groups based on gender or association with the LGBTQ+ community. The headlines and brief descriptions of the incidents often contained sensational or provocative elements, potentially exacerbating the impact of the hate speech. The language used in these descriptions underscores the severity and often public nature of the hate speech incidents. The context provided for some incidents includes cultural or societal attitudes towards gender and LGBTQ+ rights, indicating a backdrop of systemic biases or discrimination that may contribute to the perpetuation of hate speech. Most incidents were identified on Facebook pages and info portals, suggesting that social media and online platforms play a significant role in the dissemination of hate speech against gender.

Most of the comments are directed towards women, in instances where public figures like artists and MPs are shamed. The comments directed at Ganimete Musliu and the artist Murati encompass various forms of hate speech, including sexist and derogatory language. MP Ganimete Musliu criticised Prime Minister Albin Kurti for his reactions when he was in the opposition. Ganimete Musliu, who, among other things, recalled that Kurti, when he was in the opposition, had reacted to the parliamentary sessions that were held late that evening and at night: "When you came and spread your wings like an eagle, you were holding sessions at night, you were

6. https://www.kosovo-online.com/vesti/politika/posta-srbije-tokom-noci-albanski-teroristi-upali-u-nas-objekat-u-banjskoj-25-9-2023?fbclid=IwAR3OYXd_p568JouMefEJYbzRUjO9kXbhF7onzGVqUCwDIVjq_SzoE_F5hQI
7. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=366130482410499

from the people, from whom are you running away". These critiques are often followed by the Vetevendosje voters defending Albin Kurti and, in this case, name-calling Musliu. Examples such as calling Musliu "a cow" and "old witch" and asking that she disappear from Earth while using offensive terms to demean her intelligence reflect gender-based hate speech. The artist Ermira Murati (under the stage name "Orange Girl") painted the Serbian president Aleksander Vucic and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti hugging and kissing on a 3 by 1.60 m canvas under the title "K is S" on the 15th anniversary of Kosovo's independence. Additionally, comments against Murati involve nationalistic and derogatory language, including insults and threats related to ethnicity. These instances highlight a concerning mixture of sexist and ethnocentric hate speech within the comments, contributing to a hostile online environment.

"Some women know only fear and beating, they're arrogant. Some need to be beaten and then they appear as victims" said by someone on social media.

Many cases of domestic violence remain unreported in Kosovo, due to the perceived failure of law enforcement to address these cases effectively. The reluctance to report stems from a lack of trust in the police and the judicial system, which often do not react in accordance with the law. Instances where police mediate between the victim and the perpetrator contribute to a cycle of violence, with many victims returning to abusive situations.[8] Traditional societal norms further complicate the matter, as women are sometimes expected to endure violence, and divorced women face societal judgment. The patriarchal structure persists post-marriage, with women often treated as property and facing obstacles in education and employment. The prevalence of different forms of domestic violence, combined with societal attitudes and systemic issues, underscores the challenging environment for victims seeking justice. Notably, an Amnesty International report [https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur73/7123/2023/en/] mentions specific figures from 2022, revealing a significant number of reported cases of rape, sexual harassment, and sexual assault, further emphasising the urgency of addressing the issue[9]. However, crucial policies are needed for long-term survivor support, including prioritised housing and training, while also highlighting the need for a more systematic approach to prevention beyond sporadic awareness campaigns.

Media reports on the death of a transgender woman and University of Pristina student, hinted at suicide without official confirmation. Coverage drew condolences from her university and friends, but also sparked hateful reactions online, particularly on social networks where users mocked her death and targeted the LGBTQ+ community. 'The Albanian Times' violated ethical standards by posting her photos, further fuelling disrespect and hate. This case underscores the negative influence of irresponsible media reporting on sensitive issues.

Sub Narrative 3: Discrimination Against Political/Ideological Opponents 16.70%

Here, political leaders, extremist groups, and media manipulation are seen as the primary generators of hate speech. The analysis of discrimination against political or ideological opponents reveals incidents targeting a range of individuals, including activists, politicians, and public officials, with the Prime Minister of Kosovo and the President of Kosovo among the notable figures mentioned. These incidents are characterised by highly personalised attacks, employing derogatory names and phrases that aim to demean and marginalise the targeted individuals. Such personalisation tactics dehumanise and marginalise the targets further. The perpetrators of these incidents include a diverse group from society, ranging from private individuals to politicians, political parties, and state officials, indicating that hate speech against political or ideological opponents emanates from various segments of society, not just isolated figures.

The content of these incidents is predominantly categorised under negative group labelling, stereotyping, hostility, and personal insults, reflecting a pattern of using stereotypes, negative labels, and direct insults as tools for spreading hate and creating divisions within society. The headlines and descriptions of the incidents often employ provocative language, indicative of a strategy to attract attention or incite further negativity. This content contributes to a hostile environment by directly insulting or mocking the targeted groups or individuals.

8. Kosovo: From paper to practice – Kosovo must keep its commitments to domestic violence survivors. Amnesty International, 2023. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur73/7123/2023/en/
9. Ditto.

The provided contexts for these incidents often relate to broader societal, cultural, or historical tensions, suggesting that these acts of hate speech are manifestations of larger systemic issues. These contexts highlight societal attitudes and conflicts that may fuel or exacerbate hate speech against political or ideological opponents. The majority of these incidents were identified on Facebook pages, pointing to the significant role of social media platforms in the dissemination and amplification of hate speech.

Events like elections, policy disputes, and international conflicts play a role. The comments regarding the Banjska case only increased the racial slurs towards not only political figures, i.e. directed towards Albin Kurti but also the public. Mostly private individuals are the ones who are attacking and contesting Kosovo's independence.

"Albanian terrorists, with the help of America, NATO forces and 19 European countries, have occupied Kosovo and Metohija. Kosovo and Metohija are Serbia and will remain Serbia. Every occupation of Serbia has left its health, and so have you, it stinks. Your terrorists mistreat Serbs on Serbian land. You removed the monument in Pristina dedicated to the Serbian warriors who fell in the Great War, including my ancestors. You have no right to ask for anything in Serbia, you are occupiers here. God willing, we will expel you all as you have expelled us."

Another example of discrimination against political or ideological opponents involves the President of Kosovo, Vjosa Osmani. The incident is characterised by personal insults aimed at demeaning her, with derogatory terms such as "complex-ridden," "divisive," and "hateful" used to describe her. These personal attacks were made in the context of her annual speech in the Parliament of Kosovo, highlighting the use of hate speech in a politically charged setting.

The source of this hate speech was identified as a politician, a political party, or a state official, indicating that the discrimination came from within the political sphere itself. The content of this incident was categorised under personal insults, denigrating and humiliating Osmani, which reflects a pattern of using direct insults as a tool to spread hate and create division.

Media monitoring data show that women in political leadership positions, like President Osmani, are subjected to a dual form of discrimination that combines sexism with political hostility. On the occasion of her annual speech in the Assembly of Kosovo, President Vjosa Osmani said, among other things, that she does not hesitate even when she is attacked because of her appearance. To this, the deputy of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, Ganimete Musliu, has reacted on her Facebook page, among other things, has emphasized that when Osmani is now mentioning kilograms, she will be remembered for becoming president with 100 kilograms, while to leave with 50 kilograms. On the other hand, the Democratic Party of Kosovo has boycotted the speech of the president, as well as the other opposition party Alliance for the Future of Kosovo and Ramush Haradinaj. The use of gendered insults or stereotypes in political discourse serves to belittle women's contributions and question their legitimacy as leaders, reinforcing traditional gender norms and perpetuating a culture of misogyny within political spheres. In the context of President Osmani's case, the insults could be seen not just as an attack on her political ideology or decisions but also as an attempt to marginalise her based on her gender, leveraging societal biases against women to diminish her political authority.

This dual discrimination underscores the systemic barriers women face in politics, where their gender becomes an additional vector for attacks, above and beyond the ideological opposition. It reflects a broader societal issue where women in leadership are scrutinised not only for their policies but also for their gender, which is often used against them in political battles. Such tactics aim to discourage women from participating in politics or seeking leadership roles, perpetuating gender inequality within political institutions and society at large.

The intersection of gender discrimination with political ideology discrimination, especially in the case of President Osmani, calls for a nuanced understanding of hate speech and its impacts. It emphasises the need for targeted strategies that address both the gendered and ideological dimensions of such speech, promoting a political culture that respects and values diversity and equality, regardless of gender or political belief.

Sub Narrative 4: Discrimination Against Sexual Minority (Homophobia) 15.18%

There is significant concern regarding homophobia within the context examined. The analysis provides concrete examples of discrimination, illustrating the nature and impact of these incidents on individuals and the LGBTQ+ community.

Two women were involved in a physical altercation at a cafe frequented by members of the LGBTQ+ community in Pristina. This incident is reported alongside derogatory labels targeting lesbians and the LGBTQ+ community, reflecting both physical and verbal abuse. Another example is during Pride Week in Pristina, a mother openly expressed pride in her gay son, facing moral and psychological denigration in public comments. This example highlights the challenges faced by family members supporting LGBTQ+ individuals, showcasing societal attitudes towards them. These examples underscore the tangible risks faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in public spaces and during community events, where they should expect safety and acceptance. The Pride Parade in Pristina saw significant participation from the LGBTQ+ community and supporters. However, the event was marred by derogatory comments from members of the public, labelling participants in negative terms, illustrating the public's divided response to expressions of LGBTQ+ identity.

Several incidents were amplified through media channels, including info portals and social media platforms like Facebook, which suggests a dual-edged role of digital platforms: essential for raising awareness and community support but also act as venues for spreading hate speech and discrimination. The case of Anna Kolukaj, a transgender woman and activist, whose death was met with hateful comments online, exemplifies the severe impact of digital hate speech on the dignity and memory of LGBTQ+ individuals. The persistent homophobia and transphobia, as indicated in the dataset, suggest deeply ingrained prejudices that are not easily eradicated[10]. This is further complicated by the cultural and religious norms prevalent in Kosovo, which may contribute to the stigmatisation of LGBTQ+ identities and relationships.

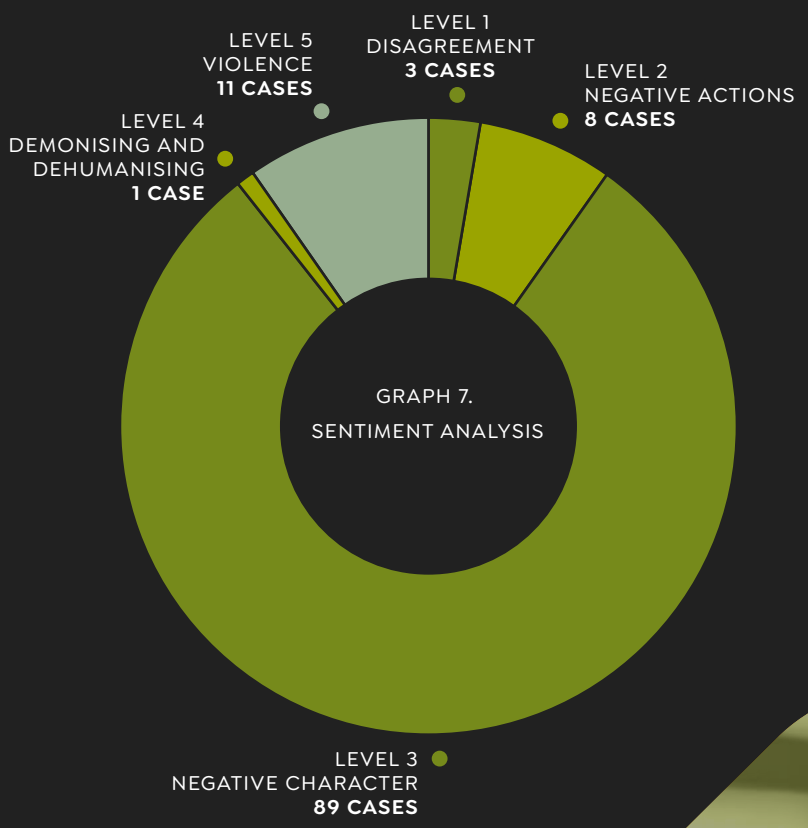
The context surrounding these incidents of discrimination against sexual minorities in Kosovo paints a picture of a society grappling with deep-seated prejudices, where LGBTQ+ individuals face both overt and covert discrimination. The incidents not only reveal the prevalence of homophobic attitudes but also the critical role of media and public events in either exacerbating or combating these attitudes. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive strategies that encompass education, legal protections, and societal engagement to foster an environment of tolerance and equality.

10. https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/countering-homophobia-in-the-media/

Sentiment analysis

The sentiment analysis shows an average is 3.08, which falls under Negative Character, a rhetoric that includes non-violent characterisations and insults. There were three cases that fell under Disagreement, eight cases under Negative Actions, 89 cases under Negative character, one case under Demonising and dehumanising and 11 cases under Violence.

Some typical toxic examples
Against Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities: Monkey, cigan
Against Albanians: Terrorists
Against women: Bitch, stupid woman, whore
Against the LGBTQ+ community: Sick people, dirty seed



GRAPH 7.
SENTIMENT ANALYSIS

Comparative analysis

The highly personalised nature of hate speech attacks across all categories is not just a tactic but a deliberate strategy to inflict maximum harm. By targeting individuals or groups with specific derogatory names and phrases, perpetrators aim to strip away the humanity and dignity of their targets. This method of personalisation goes beyond public shaming; it invades personal spaces, often leaving lasting psychological scars on victims. The use of personal attacks contributes to a culture of fear and silence, discouraging victims and their allies from speaking out against injustice.

The role of digital platforms, particularly social media, in amplifying hate speech is a significant commonality across all forms of discrimination. However, on Facebook, it's common for news portals to share acceptable news articles but fail to moderate the comments under their posts, which also makes them fertile ground for the spread of hate speech[11]. Besides personal Facebook accounts, the option to comment via a fake Facebook account, offers the space for individuals to express views they might not share in face-to-face interactions. Algorithms that prioritise engagement can inadvertently promote content that provokes strong emotional reactions, including hate speech.

The use of negative group labelling and stereotyping across all categories of discrimination serves to dehumanise the targeted groups and simplify complex individual identities into monolithic, negative caricatures. This process not only alienates and marginalises individuals but also fosters an environment where stereotypes and myths are accepted as truth. Such labelling acts as a tool of division, creating an "us vs. them" mentality that undermines social cohesion and tolerance.

One key difference lies in the specificity of discrimination faced by targeted groups. Gender-based discrimination often involves sexist stereotypes and misogynistic attitudes that specifically demean women for their gender identity or expression. This form of discrimination can range from sexist remarks to more insidious forms of misogyny that seek to undermine women's rights and their presence in public spaces. In contrast, ethnic discrimination taps into racial prejudices and xenophobia, targeting individuals based on their ethnicity, race, or nationality manifests in racial slurs, dehumanisation, or attributing negative stereotypes to entire ethnic groups.

Discrimination against political/ideological opponents is distinct in its focus on an individual's or group's political beliefs or affiliations. This type of hate speech seeks to silence dissent and can often involve character assassination, false accusations, and incitement against those holding opposing views. Meanwhile, discrimination against sexual minorities encompasses homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, targeting individuals based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression can manifest in both overt acts of violence and more subtle forms of exclusion and erasure.

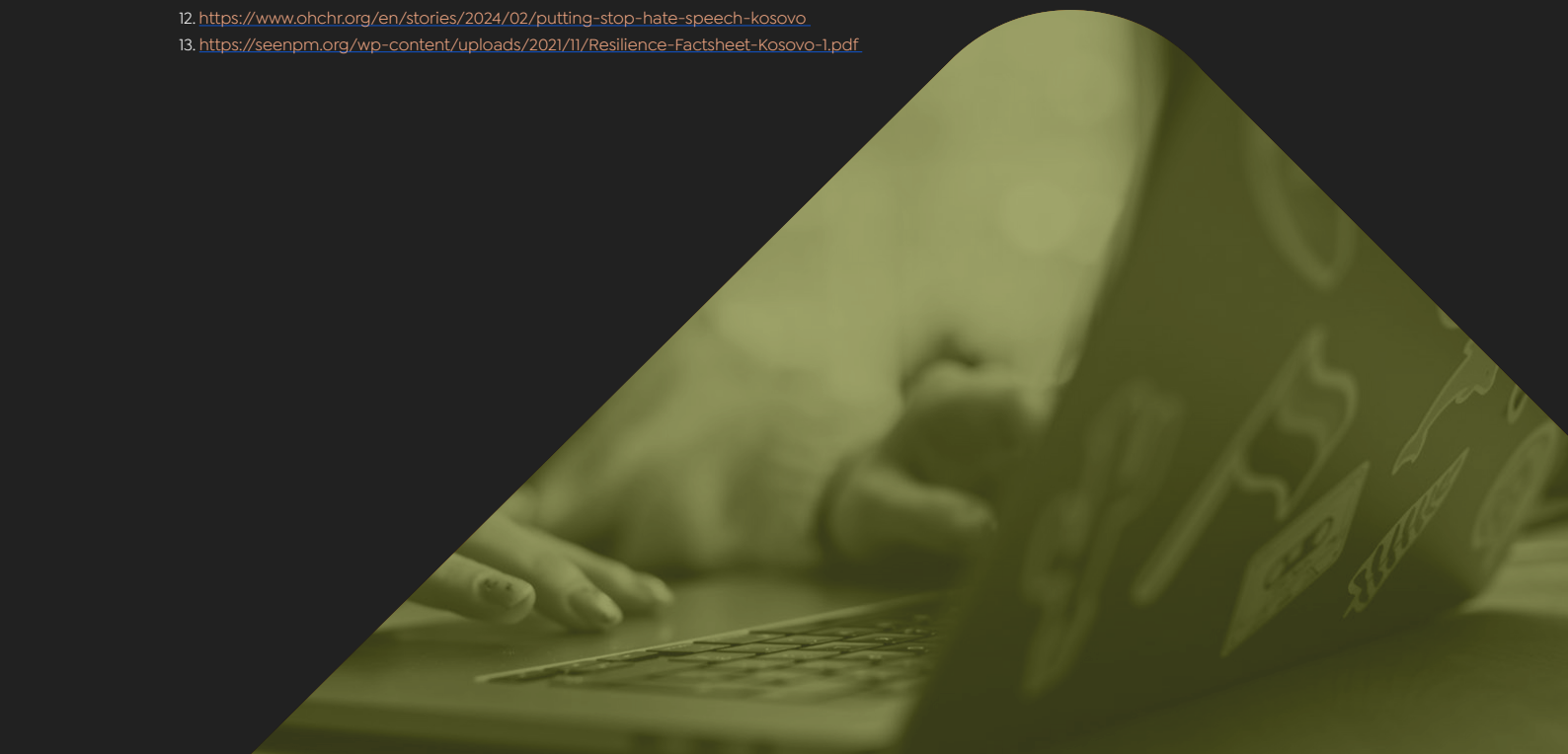
11. https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/comments-that-leave-a-mark/

Preventive and ex post actions to combat hate and disinformation narratives in the country

The United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), alongside UN Human Rights and the Council of Europe (CoE), has initiated a project to combat hate speech and discrimination in Kosovo. This project, titled "Promoting human rights and non-discrimination principles at the local level," aims to strengthen Kosovo's capacity to identify and address hate speech by training 97 anti-discrimination officers across 27 municipalities. It focuses on improving data collection, monitoring, and reporting of discrimination to central institutions, contributing to Kosovo's Annual Report on Protection from Discrimination and supporting local civil society initiatives. This effort underscores a collaborative approach to enhancing Kosovo's human rights framework, emphasising the importance of education, reporting, and legal mechanisms in fostering a more inclusive society.[12]

In Kosovo, a multifaceted approach to combating hate speech and disinformation integrates legislative, judicial, regulatory, and civil society efforts. The Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights spearheads legislative efforts to regulate hate speech, collaborating closely with the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo to address human rights violations and hate speech. This is complemented by the judiciary, including Basic Courts, the Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court, which adjudicate cases of hate speech, offering legal remedies to affected individuals. Media oversight is another critical component, with the Independent Media Commission and the Kosovo Press Council addressing complaints against media service providers for inciting hatred or violating journalism standards. On the civil society front, initiatives such as the "Combat Hate in Kosovo" project by ATRC and RADC focus on researching and reporting hate speech within the media, specifically targeting discrimination against vulnerable communities. Additionally, Internews Kosova's "Krypometer" project and the Action for Democratic Society (ADC) with its "hybrid.info" project are notable for their efforts in fact-checking and debunking disinformation, thereby indirectly combating hate speech by targeting the spread of false information. These initiatives collectively form a comprehensive strategy that leverages legislative action, judicial recourse, media regulation, and public awareness to tackle the pervasive issues of hate speech and disinformation in Kosovo, demonstrating a concerted effort to safeguard human rights and maintain journalistic integrity.[13]

12. https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/02/putting-stop-hate-speech-kosovo
13. https://seenpm.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Resilience-Factsheet-Kosovo-1.pdf



Conclusion

Understanding the differences in discrimination across gender, ethnicity, political ideologies, and sexual orientation is crucial for developing targeted strategies to combat hate speech. While the manifestations and contexts of discrimination vary, the need for inclusive, comprehensive approaches to foster tolerance and respect across all segments of society remains constant.

The most common targets of hate speech in Kosovo include ethnic groups, 44.64% of cases with a focus on minority groups like the Serbian and Roma communities. Gender is also a prominent target, with 37.50% of instances directed specifically against women.

Private individuals are the primary perpetrators of hate speech, constituting 62% of occurrences, followed by journalists or media personnel at 25%. Facebook is identified as the primary platform for hate speech incidents, with 63 out of 67 cases recorded, occurring on personal pages and news portals.

The commonalities across different types of discrimination highlight the multifaceted nature of hate speech and its deep entrenchment in societal structures and behaviours. Addressing hate speech effectively requires a comprehensive approach that considers its psychological impact, the role of digital platforms in its amplification, its reflection of societal tensions, and its use of stereotyping and group labelling. Efforts to combat hate speech must therefore involve a combination of policy interventions, educational initiatives, and community engagement strategies aimed at promoting tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for diversity.

Rapid response systems play a complementary role, offering immediate support and intervention when instances of hate speech or discrimination are detected. These systems can be designed to provide resources for victims, facilitate the reporting of hate speech to platform operators and authorities, and offer guidance on legal recourse when applicable. The effectiveness of these systems depends on their accessibility and responsiveness, ensuring that community members feel supported and empowered to act against hate speech.

Building on historical awareness of privilege and discrimination is another critical component. Community-level interventions should not shy away from confronting uncomfortable truths about past injustices and how they continue to shape present-day dynamics of exclusion and marginalisation. By fostering a collective understanding of these historical contexts, communities can begin to dismantle the narratives that perpetuate hate and division, paving the way for more inclusive and empathetic interactions.

Promoting inclusive community dialogues offers a pathway to reconciliation and healing. These dialogues should encourage open and respectful conversations about identity, difference, and the value of diversity. By bringing together individuals from various backgrounds and perspectives, communities can break down the barriers that extreme speech seeks to erect. These dialogues serve not only to educate but also to build bridges, fostering a sense of shared humanity and mutual respect.

In conclusion, addressing the challenge of deep extreme speech requires a multifaceted and community-centred approach. By mobilising awareness programmes, establishing rapid response systems, building historical awareness, and promoting inclusive dialogues, communities can develop the resilience needed to counteract hate speech and foster a culture of tolerance and respect. This effort demands commitment, collaboration, and creativity from all segments of society, including policymakers, educators, community leaders, and individuals.

Reporting Diversity Network

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT ON HATE SPEECH IN KOSOVO

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