

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Book of Abstracts

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION,
HATE SPEECH,
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

A Human Rights Perspective

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, HATE SPEECH
& RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

A Human Rights Perspective

December 8-9, 2022
New York, NY, USA



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This publication includes the abstracts accepted for presentation at the online conference titled *Freedom of Expression, Hate Speech, and Religious Freedom: A Human Rights Perspective* held on December 8-9, 2022. The conference was organized by the UNEQUAL World Research Center, IPSEC, and UN Liaison Office for IRLA and SDA.

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Editors: Nelu Burcea, PhD

Liberato C. Bautista, PhD

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Preface

Hate speech is an ongoing problem in all societies, both online and offline. As history has shown, atrocity crimes are sparked by hate speech. A growing trend of hatred and intolerance toward people who are perceived as different increases the potential to incite violence and severe human rights violations. Ethnic and religious minorities, migrants, refugees, and others who are perceived as unwelcome are often targets of hate speech and discrimination. This conference took place around the *International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime*, and brought together representatives from various fields with a significant influence on their societies.

Among the speakers were experts from international organizations, faith-based NGOs, and academics from 25 countries, who shared their experience and expertise on freedom of speech, hate speech, and religious freedom, as well as on different topics related to these main topics that impact our daily lives. A key objective of this conference was to examine hate speech from several perspectives and discuss the importance of freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief as fundamental components in building peaceful and respectful communities.

In the journey to counter hate speech, there are tough challenges. The work of promoting the values of tolerance and diversity is vital, considering the state of our world today. NGOs, human rights defenders, media and internet corporations, educators, public institutions, faith leaders, and individuals have an important role in raising awareness, promoting understanding, tolerance, respect, and inclusivity, and helping those marginalized achieve their rights.

We would like to express our appreciation to all participants for their valuable involvement in the conference, and session chairs/moderators for their assistance and professionalism. Special thanks to all guest speakers for their outstanding presentations and valuable insights.

On behalf of the organizers,

Nelu Burcea, PhD

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State-driven Hate Speech: From Nazi Germany to Date

Marco Marsili

Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Centro de investigação do Instituto de Estudos Políticos (CIEP–UCP); Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE–IUL), Centro de Estudos Internacionais (CEI–IUL); Instituto Universitário Militar, Centro de Investigação e Desenvolvimento (CIDIUM); Academia Militar, Centro de Investigação, Inovação e Desenvolvimento (CINAMIL); Centre for Strategic Research and Analysis (CESRAN)

Abstract: Legal definitions of hate speech vary from country to country and is matter of both civil law and criminal law (hate crime). It is generally intended as a public speech that expresses hate or encourages violence towards a person or group based on something such as race, skin, color, national origin, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, disability, religion, or sexual orientation. Nazi Germany is an instructive example of how far the hateful and extremist speech can go. The hate speech towards Jews – which comes from far away, at least from the Middle Ages – has never subsided, and is fueled by the confrontation with the Palestinians and the Arabs. On the other hand, over the last decade, jihadist terrorism has triggered a wave of islamophobia in Europe, the biggest one after the clash between Christians and Muslims in Middle Ages. Alongside situations that have grabbed the headlines and the attention of world public opinion, there are "regional" issues of no less importance. The hate speech supports the ethnic cleansing – genocide for some – of the Muslim minorities in Myanmar (Rohingya), in Xinjiang, China (Uyghurs, a Turkic-speaking ethnic group, and other ethnic and religious minorities), and of Darfuri during the conflict in Western Sudan (2003-ongoing). In neighboring India, the Hindu nationalists spread hate speech and incite violence against the Muslim community and other minorities. There are historical precedents, of which the Holocaust is the best known, showing that hate speech can be a precursor to atrocity crimes on a wider scale, including genocide, from Rwanda (1994, against the Tutsi) to Bosnia (1995, more than 7,000 Bosnian Muslim killed by Bosnian Serb forces in Srebrenica, Bosnia-Herzegovina) to Cambodia (1975-1979, in which approximately 1.7 million people, 21% of the country's population, were killed by the Communist group known as the Khmer Rouge). The present Russian question generates two-way hatred with Ukraine and the West, fueled by deep-faking propaganda and cognitive warfare. This paper aims to shed light on the state-driven hate speech which is going on in some countries.

Keywords: state violence, public speech, hate crime, genocide, ethnic cleansing

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