



MONITORING REPORT ON HATE SPEECH IN KOSOVO

2025

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SMART
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Reporting
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Network

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Introduction

This report is part of a broader regional effort to document and analyse hate speech and discriminatory narratives in the Western Balkans, with a specific focus on Kosovo during the period 1 January 2024 – 30 June 2025.

During this period Kosovo continued to navigate a post-war reality shaped by fragile interethnic relations, political volatility, and the growing influence of digital media. Against this backdrop, this report aims to analyse hate and disinformation narratives that emerged across online and traditional media, with a particular focus on how vulnerable groups and public discourse were targeted and shaped.

Freedom House's [Freedom in the World 2025](#) report maintains Kosovo's status as *Partly Free*. Meanwhile [Reporters Without Borders](#) ranks Kosovo 99th, a sharp decline of 24 places in 2025 *World Press Freedom Index* from its 75th position in 2024, marking the country's worst ranking to date in the region. Amid such conditions, hate speech, misinformation, and coordinated campaigns, especially on social media, continue to challenge democratic discourse and societal cohesion.

Central to this report is the recognition that hate speech does not occur in a vacuum. It emerges from, and reinforces, broader social, political, and historical tensions. The period under review was marked by political volatility, including the ongoing institutional crisis in Kosovo's northern municipalities following the 2024 local elections, as well as a stalled normalization process between Kosovo and Serbia amid diplomatic fatigue. At the same time, new cultural and ideological flashpoints, such as the emergence of the Deçani Movement advocating religious conversion to Catholicism, backlash against Kosovars performing Hajj (the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca), and polarizing debates over the Civil Code and LGBTIQ+ rights, have intensified identity-based fault lines. These developments, coupled with low trust in institutions and polarized public discourse, created fertile ground for hate speech and disinformation. Accordingly, this report adopts a sociological approach to hate speech that transcends narrow legal definitions and considers a diverse spectrum of personal and group identities.



Methodological Approach

The report follows the methodological principles established in previous *RDN* monitoring phase. It combines quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse hate and disinformation discourse (HDD) in Kosovo during 2024–2025.

Quantitatively, the research draws on 114 media incidents recorded in a structured monitoring format, including metadata such as publication date, source platform, sentiment score, and categorization of targeted groups. Qualitatively, the narrative structure, contextual triggers, symbolic language, and the broader societal framing of hate messages were analysed.

This study aims to deepen the understanding of hate and disinformation discourse (HDD) in Kosovo by identifying recurring patterns, message triggers, and the symbolic and emotional mechanisms behind such narratives. It investigates the main sources and platforms where hate and disinformation are produced, the ideas and groups they target, and the social responses they provoke.

For analytical purposes, all recorded incidents were categorised according to the **George Washington University hate speech scale**¹, which ranges from rhetorical disagreement to explicit calls for death:

- 1. Disagreement** - Rhetoric challenging ideas or beliefs without personal attack.
- 2. Negative Actions** - Rhetoric associating the group with undesirable behaviour or actions.
- 3. Negative Character** - Non-violent insults, defamation, or character attacks.
- 4. Demonising and Dehumanising** - Depiction of the group as subhuman, monstrous, or evil.
- 5. Instigation of Violence** - Calls for or justification of physical harm.
- 6. Death** - Explicit wish for or justification of killing or eliminating a group.

1. Bahador Babak et al. (2019), *Monitoring Hate Speech in the US*, George Washington University.

Quantitative Analysis of Hate and Disinformation Narratives

Between 2024 and 2025, a total of **114 hate or disinformation incidents** were documented in Kosovo. These incidents span various target groups, media platforms, and perpetrator profiles. The data reveals the following key trends:

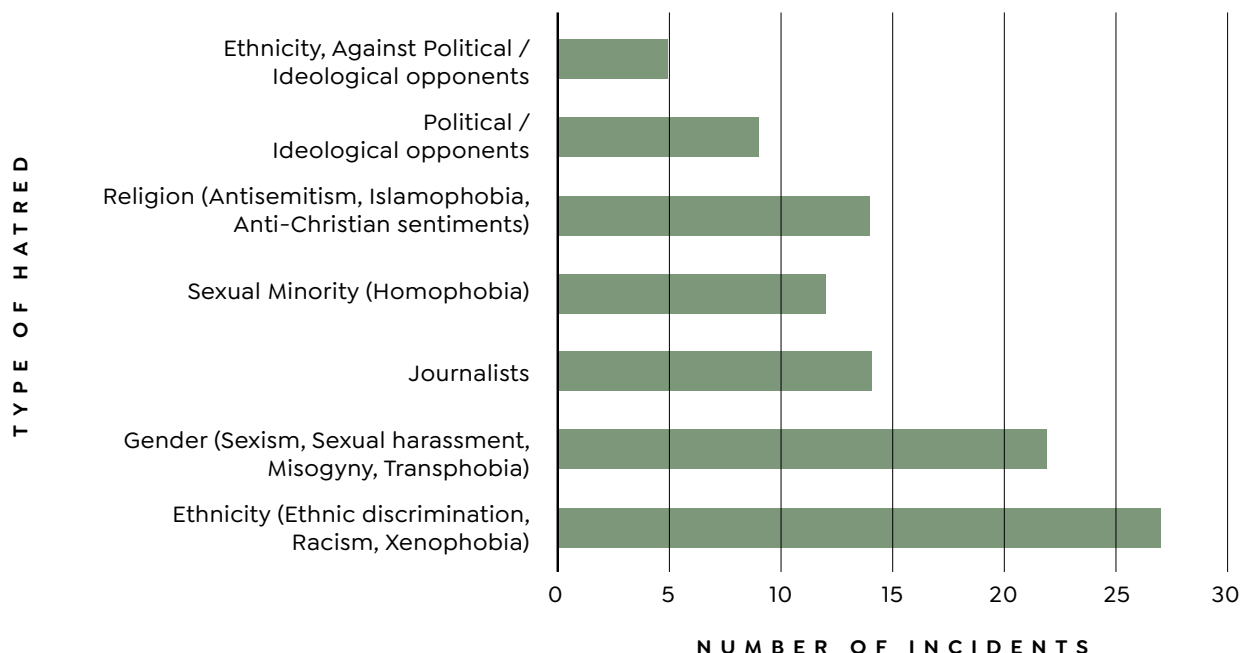
Targets of Hate Speech and Disinformation

The most frequently targeted group was based on **ethnicity**, with 27 incidents involving xenophobia, ethnic discrimination, or racism. **Gender-based hatred** followed with 22 incidents, while **journalists** were the third most targeted group (14 incidents), illustrating the vulnerability of media actors in public discourse.

The following chart displays the top categories of hatred, highlighting also the presence of **religious intolerance** (14 cases), **homophobia** (12 cases), and complex multi-layered incidents combining several categories.

Although each case was coded under its dominant category, several incidents exhibited overlapping forms of discrimination, for example, combining misogyny with homophobia or nationalism with religious hatred. These intersections were noted but distributed into their primary target categories for clarity and consistency.

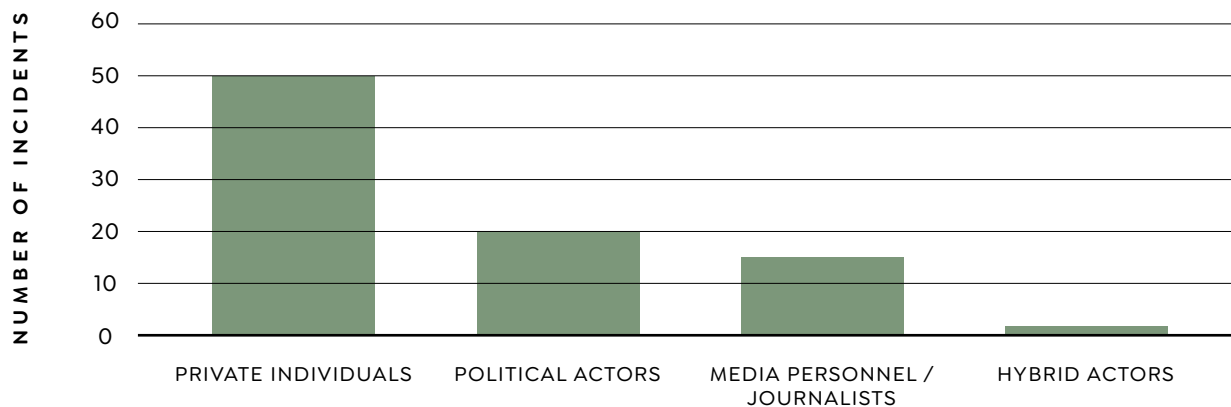
Figure 1: Number of hate speech incidents by type



Perpetrator Types

Private individuals were the most frequent perpetrators, responsible for over **42% of all incidents (50 cases)**. This was followed by **political actors** (20 cases) and **media personnel or journalists** (15 cases). In many cases, hate narratives involved **hybrid actors** (e.g., politician + journalist), blurring the line between institutional and personal communication.

Figure 2: Main perpetrators of hate/disinformation incidents

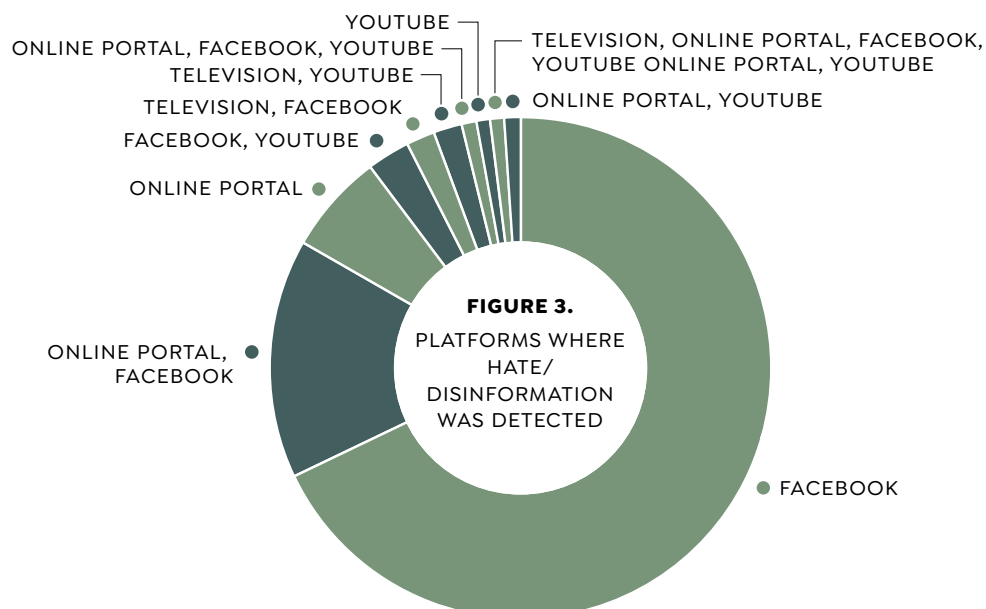


Platforms and Media Outlets

Social media, especially **Facebook**, was the dominant medium for hate dissemination, implicated in **over 76 incidents** either as a sole or joint platform. Online portals (often quoting unverified sources or publishing misleading headlines) followed, with frequent overlap across multiple platforms including **YouTube, Telegram, and X (Twitter)**.

As shown in the following chart, platform concentration points to the need for targeted interventions on Facebook and its local media ecosystems.

Figure 3: Platforms where hate/disinformation was detected



Sentiment Analysis Distribution

A majority of incidents were characterized by **negative character attacks (78 cases)**, often including slurs, delegitimizing labels, and dehumanizing comparisons. A smaller but significant share involved **calls to violence (15 cases)** and **negative actions (16 cases)**, reflecting moments of intensified hostility.

Narrative and Sub-Narrative Analysis

The hate and disinformation discourse in Kosovo during the monitoring period (January 2024 – June 2025) was anchored in culturally resonant narratives that mobilized religious, ethnic, and gender-based divisions. These narratives were not static; they intensified around specific trigger events such as national holidays, anniversaries of war-related incidents, political tensions with Serbia, the outbreak of the Gaza conflict, and ongoing debates over the role of religion in public life. Their recurrence demonstrates the persistent and reactive nature of hate speech, often shaped by the evolving political climate and amplified through social media ecosystems.

Ethno-Religious Polarization: Apostasy, Conversion, and the “Enemy Within”

A notable sub-narrative during the 2024-2025 monitoring period was the vilification of those who challenge dominant religious affiliations through conversion or renunciation. These expressions of religious dissent, such as individuals converting from Islam to Catholicism or embracing atheism, triggered strong backlash from both clerical figures and segments of the public, revealing deep anxieties around national cohesion and identity.

This narrative came to the forefront in April 2025, when Arbër Gashi, a member of the Lëvizja e Deçanit (Deçan Movement), publicly praised the conversion of the Rugova family to Catholicism. In a social media post on X (formerly Twitter), Gashi described the event as:

“The greatest victory of Albanians in the 21st century.”

This celebratory framing of religious conversion provoked a harsh response from Imam Osman Musliu of the Drenas Mosque. In a comment posted online, the imam attacked both Gashi and the movement he represents, writing:

“This ‘DEVIL’S MOVEMENT’ and that of Wahhabism-extremism are the greatest ‘VICTORY’ for Serbia and all those enemies, East and West, who wish nothing good for the Albanians and our lands. You are the puppies of those who try every day to destroy Kosovo and the Albanian identity... O miserable one, not to say a corpse!”

(“Kjo ‘LEVIZJE e DREQIT’ edhe ajo e vehabizmit-extremizmit janë ‘FITORJA’ ma e madhe e serbis e gjithë atyre armiqëve Lindje e Perendim qe nuk ua deshironj te miren shqiptarëve dhe trojeve tona ju jeni klysh te atyre qe mundohen çdo ditë me shkatrrua Kosoven dhe Shqiptarin ... OOOOO mjeran mos me te thanë coftinë!”)

This rhetoric blends religious condemnation with accusations of treason, casting the act of conversion as a betrayal of both faith and nation. It positions figures like Gashi, and by extension, the Deçan Movement, as internal enemies working to fragment Albanian unity, aligning them rhetorically with Wahhabist extremism, another religious current frequently stigmatized in Kosovo’s discourse.

What is significant here is the fusion of religion, nationalism, and cultural purity, wherein abandoning Islam is framed not as a personal spiritual journey, but as an attack on the collective body of the nation. The accusation that such conversions serve Serbia’s interests taps into longstanding post-war trauma and suspicion, intensifying the polarizing effect of the message.

This example illustrates how hate speech in Kosovo frequently exceeds doctrinal disagreement and veers into biopolitical territory, labelling entire categories of individuals as unworthy of belonging due to their beliefs, affiliations, or perceived loyalties. In this case, conversion is portrayed not as a freedom of conscience, but as a civilizational threat. The language used: “puppies,” “devil’s movement,” “corpse”, dehumanizes the targets and reinforces exclusionary boundaries around religious and national identity.

Gendered Hate and Misogyny

The 2024–2025 monitoring period revealed entrenched and targeted gender-based hate speech in Kosovo’s media ecosystem. Women in public life, particularly those in politics, activism, and the LGBTIQ+ community, were subject to patterns of harassment that extended beyond personal attacks. These narratives were embedded in a broader attempt to exclude women from the symbolic and political fabric of the nation.

Often, hate speech against women functioned not just as misogyny but as a policing mechanism of national and moral identity, suggesting that women who speak out, challenge norms, or visibly occupy public space are stepping outside the bounds of accepted belonging. A stark example involves Vlora Çitaku, deputy leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, who was subjected to a barrage of misogynistic comments on Facebook following a political statement. One commenter wrote:

“Kurve shpiunave te panit”

(“This whore from the PAN² spies”)

This slur combines political delegitimization (labelling her as part of the discredited PAN coalition) with sexualized hate speech. It is a deliberate attack not only on her gender but on her political legitimacy and loyalty to the nation, implying she serves foreign or internal enemies.

Another case involved Zana Avdiu, a civic activist who appeared on a televised debate. Her participation triggered a stream of gendered hate, with commenters calling her:

“Lavire, një lezbejk tinzare.”

(“A whore, a sneaky lesbian.”)

The insult deploys both misogynistic and homophobic tropes, reinforcing the idea that women who dissent, especially if perceived to have non-conforming sexual identities, are inherently untrustworthy, morally corrupt, and unfit to represent “true” Albanian values.

These examples show how women in public life are not just insulted but excommunicated symbolically from national belonging, where femininity is accepted only if it is passive, modest, and silent.

The case of Edona James, a transgender public figure, also provoked dehumanizing commentary, including:

“Kapne mar vrane.”

(“Kill her.”)

This is not only a call for violence but a rejection of trans existence as a legitimate identity. Trans women, especially those in public life, are targeted as symbolic threats to the nation’s moral order representing “Western decadence” or the “erosion of traditional Albanian values.” Gender non-conformity becomes synonymous with treason to cultural identity.

These examples illustrate how gendered hate is not isolated or incidental. It is structural, systemic, and often intersectional, linking gender, sexuality, and political affiliation into a broader logic of exclusion and delegitimization. Women’s voices, bodies, and choices are policed as part of an ongoing struggle over who gets to define and represent the nation.

2. PAN was a political coalition in Kosovo composed of three parties, PDK (Democratic Party of Kosovo), AAK (Alliance for the Future of Kosovo), and NISMA (Social Democratic Initiative), which jointly contested the 2017 parliamentary elections with Ramush Haradinaj as their candidate for prime minister.

Geopolitical Scapegoating and Religious Identity

The war in Gaza served as a symbolic trigger in several narratives. In one case, a man verbally attacked Prime Minister Albin Kurti during a press appearance by referencing Israeli-Palestinian relations:

“Aaah more i pa fe more pis more... shka je ti, se tkallxon Alahu...”

(“Ah you godless pig... what are you... Allah will punish you”)

Such expressions merge **geopolitical outrage** with local religious identification, inverting the political position of the state into a betrayal of religious values.

Following the publication of a documentary by the online outlet Insajderi on the lives of Catholic nuns in Kosovo, hateful comments emerged targeting the nuns. The reportage, which depicted the nuns’ daily routines, religious devotion, and decision to remain unmarried, triggered online backlash. One comment read:

“Kjo nuk esht Fe po. Kjo te smundje Psiqike qe nuk te Len liri me jetu Jeten qysh ki qef.”

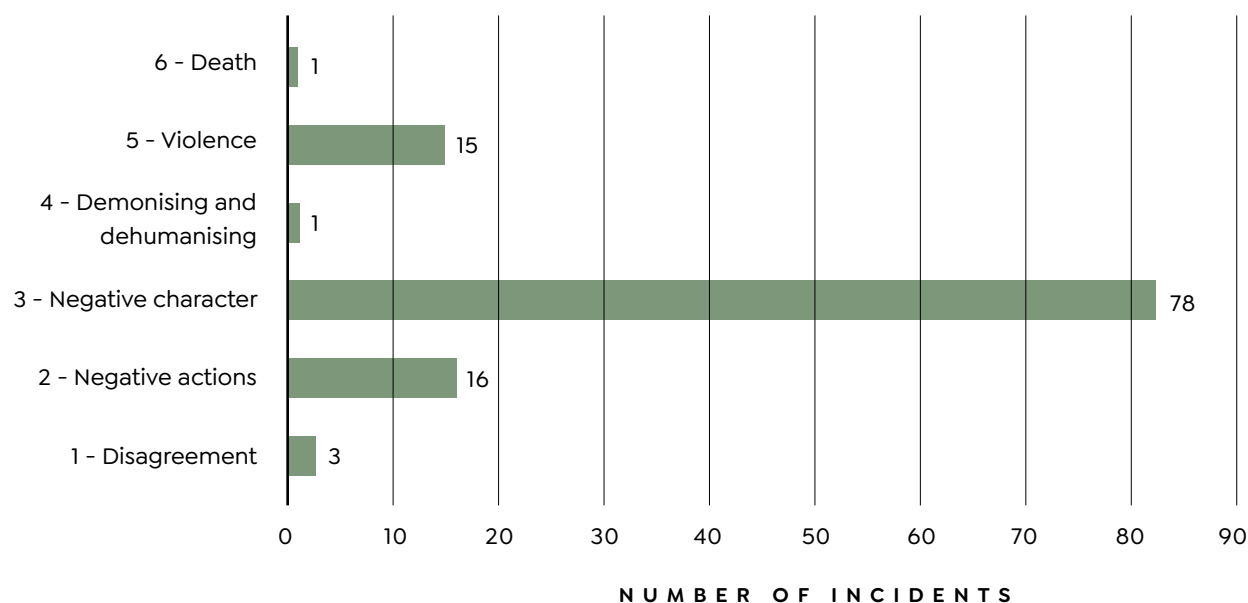
(“This is not a religion. This is a mental illness that doesn’t let you live life the way you want.”)

Such reactions reveal how women’s religious choices, particularly those outside dominant social expectations, can become the target of public scorn. The hate expressed here does not reflect theological disagreement but rather a broader cultural discomfort with women who reject marriage and traditional gender roles.

Sentiment Analysis

The dataset was evaluated using a six-level sentiment coding scale, where **1** represents mild disagreement and **6** denotes the most extreme expression (death threats). The average sentiment score across all Kosovo-based incidents was **3.10**, indicating a moderately toxic discourse.

Figure 4: Distribution of sentiment in analysed incidents



Distribution of Sentiment Levels

- > **Negative character attacks** were the most common form of sentiment (78 cases), involving personal insults, humiliation, and delegitimization.
- > **Negative actions** (16 cases) typically included calls for exclusion, restriction, or punishment.
- > **Explicit violence** appeared in **15 cases**, including threats and justifications of physical harm.
- > A small number of cases included **death wishes** (1 case), **dehumanizing language** (1 case), and **mild disagreement** (3 cases).

This breakdown reflects a discourse environment in which character assassination dominates, while direct incitement to violence remains an active and concerning presence.

Examples of Highly Toxic Language

- 1 **“Veq spot shoh o i biri shkines se besen e shqiptarit po ta jap se pat vra ty e do si ti se lo dije ditet e numrume i ki”**
 (“Pity I don’t see you, you son of a Serb woman, I give my Albanian word of honour I will kill you, your days are numbered”) – **Sentiment 6 (Death)**
- 2 **“Qenat e shkins duhet mi rreh mire dajak”**
 (“Serb dogs should be beaten well and hard”) – **Sentiment 5 (Violence)**
- 3 **“Femra lavire që shiten më pare, degjenrimi femrav shqiptare nga kurva”**
 (“Female prostitutes that sell themselves for money, degeneration of Albanian females by whores”) – **Sentiment 4 (Dehumanizing)**

Religious Rhetoric and Symbolic Disagreement

Religious leaders in Kosovo during the 2024–2025 monitoring period primarily appear in **Level 1 incidents**, characterized by symbolic or ideological disagreement rather than direct incitement or personal attacks. Their rhetoric, while not violent in form, often reinforces **moral boundaries** and **cultural hierarchies**, particularly around questions of religious identity, national values, and social transformation.

A notable case involved **Imam Fadil Musliu**, who during a religious class with children, posed the question:

“Si mund t’i bindni prindërit të mos e festojnë Vitin e Ri?”

(“How can you convince your parents not to celebrate New Year’s Eve?”)

The incident came to public attention after the mosque posted photos of the children and details of the activity on its official Facebook page. The post sparked significant online backlash and media coverage, with critics, including sociologists and citizens, accusing the initiative of indoctrination and misuse of minors for ideological purposes. The Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK) publicly distanced itself from the activity, describing it as unplanned and unauthorized by its central bodies, though the local imam defended it as part of regular religious instruction.

Although framed as a moral critique rather than political incitement, the event sought to reshape cultural norms through religious authority. Once disseminated via social media, it became a site of public contestation, illustrating how even non-violent religious messaging can enter polarized public discourse and contribute to the delineation of what is perceived as “pure” versus “deviant” cultural behaviour.

However, in other cases, **religious figures escalated to narratives with exclusionary or existential framing**, blurring the line between doctrinal disagreement and social polarization. For example, **Nusret Shiti**, the imam of Hani i Elezit, publicly condemned Kosovo's proposed Civil Code that permits same-sex unions, stating:

“Ky kod është pro zhdukjes së species njeri.”

(“This code supports the extinction of the human species.”)

This framing **rejects legal pluralism** as well as casts LGBTIQ+ rights as a **civilizational threat**, mobilizing fear and moral panic in opposition to democratic reforms. The statement reflects a pattern where religious discourse engages in **biopolitical framing**, defining whose existence is seen as legitimate.

Another thread of symbolic tension observed during the monitoring period revolves around increased religious visibility, particularly Islamic practices such as Hajj pilgrimage, hijab, and mosque-based education. Traditionally, the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, has held an accepted and respected place in Kosovo's religious landscape. However, recent public discourse reveals a growing intolerance toward such expressions of Islamic identity.

In 2025, several online media outlets reported on Kosovo citizens performing Hajj, accompanied by images and interviews of pilgrims. The comment sections of these posts quickly filled with hostile reactions, including accusations that returning pilgrims were “importing Arab culture,” “radicalizing youth,” and “reinterpreting the Quran in ways incompatible with Albanian tradition.” What was once considered a personal religious duty is now increasingly framed as a threat to national identity or social cohesion. This backlash is both directed at **Islamic political actors**, and increasingly targets **ordinary believers**, especially women and girls wearing the hijab, or youth attending mosque-based religious schools. One cleric, speaking on television, declared:

“Në çdo lagje në Kosovë do të hapim shkolla fetare, dhe askush nuk mund të na ndalojë.”

(“We will open religious schools in every neighbourhood in Kosovo, and no one can stop us.”)

While this may express religious determination, public reactions frequently interpreted such statements as **assertions of power** and **encroachments on secular life**, fuelling a polarized debate about the role of Islam in public education.

Finally, **conversion narratives**, particularly involving the *Lëvizja e Deçanit* (Deçan Movement), have added to the religious discourse's volatility. The movement, established last year, reportedly includes dozens of individuals who have **renounced Islam**, embraced **atheism**, or converted to **Catholicism**, claiming a return to their ancestral faith and a rejection of what they term “**radical Islam**.” A portion of this group has cited **the use of Arabic in sermons**, the **importation of Middle Eastern interpretations of Islam**, and **non-local religious leadership** as key motivations for distancing from their birth religion.

Such shifts have triggered contentious debates online, with both supportive and hateful narratives circulating in equal measure. The underlying issue, however, is **not theology per se** but rather **the intersection of religious identity, national belonging, and fears of cultural replacement**.

Although these examples largely remain within **non-violent discursive boundaries**, they contribute to a **gradual normalization of exclusionary narratives**, often directed at LGBTIQ+ individuals, women, converts, and religious minorities. While the **sentiment level remains low**, the **emotive charge** and **amplification potential** of these messages are significant.

Religious leaders, due to their perceived moral authority, play a **pivotal role in shaping group norms**, which may later be radicalized or weaponized in more toxic environments (e.g., social media comment sections). Therefore, even **Level 1 incidents** should be understood as **cultural primers**, capable of reinforcing social divides through **symbolic violence**, if not through legal or physical aggression.

Public Figures and Celebrities – Levels 3 & 5

From Character Attacks to Instigations of Violence

Public figures, especially celebrities and influencers, frequently dominate the **middle to upper range of the hate spectrum**, namely **Level 3 (Negative Character Attacks)** and **Level 5 (Instigation of Violence)**. These individuals often leverage their visibility and audience reach to normalize personal insults, delegitimize religious or sexual identities, and even issue **implicit or explicit threats**. Unlike ordinary citizens, these figures have **amplification power**, which transforms even a single post or statement into a viral cultural message, capable of shaping social attitudes.

Level 3 > Character Delegitimization & Symbolic Vilification

One case involves a **public figure** who, during a televised appearance, questioned the religious legitimacy of a Catholic place of worship:

“Nuk i them kishë. Objekt i Llapushnikut. Se ai është objekt i fesatit. Për fesat u nis. Fesat po bën.”
 (“I don’t call it a church. It’s just a building from Llapushnik. It’s an object of depravity. It was built for festivals. That’s what it’s doing—hosting festivals.”)

This rhetoric doesn’t call for violence directly, but it strips the institution of its sacredness and casts it as morally impure. Such symbolic delegitimization erodes religious coexistence and it lays the groundwork for social exclusion, especially in **multi-faith communities** like Kosovo.

Another **Level 3** incident occurred when a well-known imam, appearing on a political talk show, labeled the *Lëvizja e Deçanit*, a movement involving public religious conversions and atheism, as a harmful phenomenon:

“Kjo Lëvizja e Deçanit është ekstremiste. Nuk është në rregull me ia fy besimin diku tjetër.”
 (“This Deçan Movement is extremist. It’s not right to insult another person’s faith.”)

Though the imam presents himself as condemning extremism, his framing implicitly associates conversion with **radicalism**, thereby **delegitimizing religious change** and reinforcing the notion that public departures from Islam are socially deviant.

Level 5 > Instigation and Threats of Violence

At the most severe level of hate speech, we see examples of **celebrity figures issuing direct threats** of violence—especially when confronted by public critique or in defence of religious honour. In one particularly alarming case, a well-known rapper (Gold AG) used offensive language against journalist Vullnet Krasniqi during a televised debate. Following the broadcast and a critical Facebook post by Krasniqi, he received repeated death threats from individuals on TikTok, prompting a police report and public reaction from the Association of Journalists of Kosovo.

“Mu’s’mund te m’arrestoni, kurrë hiç, e 700 mijë vjet, harrojeni këtë... A Vullnet Krasniqi, ty të kam tregu se edhe sytë kam me t’i djegë cigare, mos gabo me dalë... Unë kam me ta q* f’miljen për Gold AG... Kur të më arrestoni ju Policia e Kosovës, unë ua jap dorë, ju thom hallall ju koftë... Vullnetin, kam me gjete, mbajeni në mend çka po ju thom, 16 copa kam me ja njeh, rafall...”

(“You can never arrest me, not in 700 thousand years, forget it... Vullnet Krasniqi, I’ve told you—I’ll burn your eyes with cigarettes, don’t even think about showing up... I’ll f*** your family for Gold AG... When you arrest me, Kosovo Police, I’ll shake your hand and say well done... Vullnet—I will find him, remember what I’m telling you, I’ll cut him into 16 pieces, a whole round of bullets...”)

This is a **Level 5** incident, involving direct, graphic threats against a journalist, rooted in **homophobia, misogyny, and personal vengeance**. The language is emotionally charged, violent, and designed to incite fear, directly to the target and to anyone who might share similar identities or views.

Such statements are **not isolated outbursts**; they are **cultural signifiers**, legitimized by fame and widely disseminated across platforms like Facebook and YouTube. In this case, the aggressor's social status intensifies the threat, signalling that **impunity and entitlement** shield hate speech when voiced by celebrities.

It is important to note that this report's findings are shaped by the methodological focus on high-reach and high-impact incidents, often involving public figures. While this approach captures the amplified effects of hate speech in the public domain, it does not account for more diffuse or low-visibility cases involving private individuals. As such, the prevalence of celebrities and influencers in the data reflects their media reach rather than implying exclusivity in perpetrating hate speech. However, the data confirms that public figures disproportionately populate the upper tiers of toxicity, particularly in **character-based vilification (Level 3)** and **incitement to violence (Level 5)**. Their public platform amplifies the **emotional and symbolic charge** of their words, transforming personal threats into **cultural validation for intolerance**.

These examples also reveal the intersectionality of hate, where misogyny, homophobia, and religious delegitimization are often **interwoven** in the same incident. This compounds the harm for marginalized individuals and normalizes **binary us-vs-them narratives** that erode democratic discourse.

As such, **celebrities and influencers** must be viewed not just as entertainers, but as **opinion leaders** whose rhetoric carries serious societal implications, especially in a fragile media ecosystem like Kosovo's, where editorial standards and content moderation remain inconsistent.

Levels 4-5 Gender-Based Violence and Public Discourse:

From Institutional Silence to Online Hate

The attempted femicide in Fushë Kosovë and the femicide in Gushtericë e Poshtme were widely reported across media outlets. However, these cases also revealed profound issues in how violence against women is represented, discussed, and, at times, trivialized in Kosovo's public discourse, spanning editorial decisions, social media comments, and institutional inaction.

Level 4 > Symbolic Vilification and Misogynistic Framing

In both cases, media coverage often employed sensationalist language, emphasizing the "drama" of the crimes while downplaying systemic context. Headlines foregrounded the perpetrator's voice – such as Idriz Alijaj's quote:

“Unë sot nuk dua të përgjigjem më gjatë, vetëm dua t’ju tregoj se gjithçka që kam bërë sot me Sh.F e kam bërë me qëllim për ta vvarë.”

(“I don't want to say more today; I just want you to know that everything I did today with Sh.F I did with the intent to kill her.”)

While the quote reflects the **severity of the crime**, its repetition across headlines gave **undue visibility to the perpetrator's voice**, with minimal editorial framing or warnings. Such editorial decisions risk **sensationalizing violence** and further traumatizing victims and survivors.

Moreover, few media outlets contextualized the statement within systemic failures or judicial negligence, even though the man had violated a restraining order and had a record of **38 prior offenses**.

Level 5: Online Calls for Blame and Exclusion

In online comment sections, particularly under media posts on Facebook, blame was shifted toward the victims, with frequent assertions that the women had "provoked" the violence or had failed in their roles as partners. These narratives mirror Level 5 incitement of violence, as they included explicit justifications of violence, thinly veiled threats, and attempts to morally exclude women who are seen as not conforming to patriarchal norms. These comments were rarely moderated or removed.

Weak Moderation of Hate Speech in Comment Sections

In the case of **Marija Zivkovic's murder** by her husband in Gračanica, the response across mainstream media was largely factual. However, the **comment sections on high-traffic Facebook pages** and online platforms saw **disturbing instances of ethnic hate speech and misogyny**, particularly on the Facebook page of *Gazeta Sinjali*.

While most platforms published only official police or prosecution statements, *Sinjali* enabled an unfiltered comment thread in which users posted discriminatory content, including:

Blerim Bela: "Bile një lajmi i mirë më n'diva se ky qita qetnik kan kanë mërre në qafë."

("At least I heard some good news - that this Chetnik finally got someone killed.")

Bessi Beqiri: "Shkau vret shkinen, një shkin më pak."

("The Serb kills the Serb woman, one less 'shkin' around.")

These comments perpetuate **hate based on ethnicity** while also reflecting a **disturbing normalization of gendered and racialized violence**. Notably, *Gazeta Sinjali*, which published more content on the femicide than any other outlet, **failed to moderate or remove** these comments, despite their **clear violation of Facebook's community guidelines** and Kosovo's own legal framework on incitement and hate speech.

Both cases show that **media coverage of gender-based violence**, when not accompanied by responsible framing or **comment moderation**, can serve as **a vector for hate speech**:

- > Perpetrators' words were quoted directly and prominently, with **minimal sensitivity to victims or survivors**.
- > **Comment sections**, especially on Facebook, often became **hotbeds for hate**, with little to no intervention from news outlets.
- > Hate speech in these contexts was **intersectional**, blending **ethnic slurs, misogyny, and victim-blaming narratives**.

These patterns reveal a **critical gap** in editorial standards and platform governance, reinforcing the need for **mandatory comment moderation** on violence-related content and **training for journalists** in trauma-informed reporting.

Visibility Analysis

Out of 114 incidents recorded, **112 (98%)** included some form of **audience reach data**, indicating a strong emphasis on the virality and amplification potential of hate and disinformation narratives in Kosovo.

Main Distribution Channels

Analysis of visibility-related metadata reveals that:

- > **X (formerly Twitter)** was the most frequently mentioned platform in reach statements (**29 incidents**), despite its relatively smaller user base in Kosovo.
- > **Online portals** (22 mentions) played a prominent role in publishing or republishing hate-laden commentary.
- > **YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram** were also referenced, though less frequently in reach annotations.

Illustrative Examples of Reach

Media Outlet	Platform	Audience Reach
TV 10	Facebook	309000
Gazeta Blic	Facebook	479000
Kossev Portal	Facebook	70000
RTV Dukagjini YouTube	YouTube	20000

These figures indicate that **many hate incidents occurred in high-reach environments**, maximizing their potential impact on public opinion. While Facebook was the dominant platform in raw incident count (see Chart 3), **portals and TV media pages on YouTube or X also played a major role in extending the reach** of inflammatory narratives.

While reach data was available for the vast majority of incidents, it is crucial to consider the amplification effect of platforms with large audiences. A significant portion of high-toxicity content (levels 4–6) appeared on channels with substantial followings, such as major Facebook pages, YouTube broadcasts, and online portals, thereby compounding the potential harm and normalizing hostile narratives within mainstream discourse.

Comparative Analysis

When examining the hate and disinformation discourse in Kosovo in 2024–2025 comparatively, three structural patterns emerge:

1 Dominance of Character Attacks Over Institutional Critique

Compared to reports from neighboring countries (e.g., Serbia or North Macedonia), Kosovo's hate discourse is highly **personalized**. Rather than critiquing policies or institutions, public comments frequently attack **individual identity traits**, especially ethnicity, religion, or gender. This aligns with the overwhelming presence of “*negative character*” sentiment scores (78 out of 114 incidents).

2 Ethnic and Religious Lines as Primary Fault Lines

While countries like Albania report higher levels of disinformation related to governance or electoral manipulation, Kosovo's narratives are more **ethnically and religiously polarized**. This is particularly evident around:

- a) The Israel–Palestine conflict (used to polarize political leaders),
- b) Domestic religious leadership disputes,
- c) Commemorations of the Kosovo War (e.g., Reçak massacre denial).

3 Platforms of Transmission: Facebook

Contrary to trends observed in some regions where encrypted applications like [Telegram](#) and algorithm-driven platforms such as TikTok have emerged as key vectors for disinformation, Kosovo's hate discourse remains most visible and widely circulated via public platforms, particularly [Facebook](#) and online news portals. This is confirmed by media monitoring results showing that 106 out of 114 recorded incidents of hate speech occurred on Facebook, either through personal pages or media outlet accounts, making it the dominant channel for dissemination.



Preventive and Ex Post Actions to Combat Hate and Disinformation Narratives

During the 2024–2025 period, Kosovo saw **limited but growing efforts** from civil society and institutions aimed at combating hate speech and disinformation. These responses were often reactive rather than preventive, and varied in scope, visibility, and effectiveness.

Institutional Responses

The Kosovo Agency for Information and Privacy issued several reminders regarding ethical boundaries for media reporting, especially in cases of gender-based violence and ethnic tension. However, formal sanctions remained rare, and implementation mechanisms weak. The Council of the Press issued warnings in a handful of egregious media cases but did not develop systemic guidelines for online hate.

Civil Society Initiatives

Compared to the previous monitoring cycle, civil society and institutional activities in Kosovo gained visibility in 2024, particularly through initiatives like the UNFPA-UNDP backed “[Youth-led Movement to Challenge Hate Speech](#)” held in January 2024. This initiative brought together journalists from diverse ethnic backgrounds to counter divisive narratives through storytelling and intercommunal media engagement. During this period, NGOs such as BIRN Kosovo and D4D Institute (Democracy for Development) remained actively engaged in combating hate speech and strengthening media literacy:

BIRN Kosovo implemented the “[Promoting Fact-Based Reporting and Media Literacy](#)” project (October 2023–June 2024). This included school-based workshops and fact-checking training with cross-community young journalists, collaborating with KosSev to debunk disinformation and build resilience among media consumers. D4D Institute published editorial and research outputs throughout 2024 that called for increased citizen vigilance and critical thinking to combat misinformation, especially in response to political and ethnic polarization online. BIRN Kosovo also launched a major new report in April 2025 titled “[Hate Speech and Disinformation During the 2025 Election in Kosovo](#)”, which tracked hate speech by political actors during the February 2025 parliamentary campaign and advocated for improved media oversight and electoral accountability.

However, regulatory measures remain absent and media platforms do not consistently moderate user comment sections, allowing derogatory hate speech to spread unchecked. Comprehensive progress in legal enforcement and platform moderation is still pending. It would be worth considering:

- Mandatory moderation or automated filtering for high-risk topics,
- Pre-moderation of comments on sensitive stories,
- Or temporarily disabling comments where hate content is prevalent.

Conclusion

The 2024–2025 hate and disinformation landscape in Kosovo presents a stark image of a society still deeply divided along **ethnic, religious, and gendered** lines, with **social media serving as both the battleground and the amplifier** of these divisions.

Three core findings emerge from this monitoring:

1 Facebook as the Epicentre of Hate Discourse

Facebook dominates both in terms of incident volume and amplification reach. With over 76 out of 114 incidents linked to this platform, it is the primary ecosystem for hate and misinformation. Its comment sections, often unmanaged, host attacks against ethnic groups, journalists, women, and LGBTIQ+ individuals.

However, it is important to note that this finding reflects the scope and design of the monitoring, which prioritized publicly accessible content on mainstream platforms. While Facebook allows for direct observation of comments and posts, other platforms, such as Telegram, TikTok, or private chat applications, were not monitored with the same depth or methodological tools, due to their closed or semi-closed nature. Therefore, the findings should not be interpreted as an exhaustive representation of hate discourse across all digital platforms in Kosovo, but rather as an indicative sample rooted in the most visible public domains.

2 Narratives Driven by Identity Politics and Historical Triggers

Many incidents were rooted in symbolic memory and identity construction. This is particularly evident around symbolic triggers such as the Račak massacre anniversary, which continues to prompt revisionist or denialist rhetoric. On January 15, 2024, marking 25 years since the massacre, Serbian MP Milovan Drecun publicly reiterated that “Račak was not a massacre” but a fabricated scene staged by international actors. Statements like these not only inflame ethnic tensions but also legitimize disinformation narratives that deny wartime atrocities, fostering a hostile discursive environment especially on social media platforms where they are widely shared.

“Drecuni për Račakun: E pakuptueshme që 25 vjet këmbëngulet që gënjeshtër të paraqitet si e vërtetë.”

“Drecun on Račak: It is incomprehensible that for 25 years there has been insistence on presenting a lie as the truth”.

Hate speech often disguises itself as patriotic rhetoric, using religion or ethnicity to frame political disagreement as betrayal.

Following examples demonstrate how **binary logic** and **dehumanization** underpin many narratives:

“Qenat e shkins duhet mi rreh”

(“Serb dogs should be beaten”)

“Femra lavire që shiten më pare, degjenrimi femrav shqiptare nga kurva.”

(“Female prostitutes that sell themselves for money, degeneration of Albanian females by whores”)

3 Weak Institutional Deterrence

Despite efforts by CSOs and isolated public institutions, **there is no cohesive national strategy** to address online hate or disinformation. Warnings are rarely followed by consequences, and the absence of digital regulation creates a permissive environment for toxic expression.

This report confirms that **hate and disinformation are not fringe phenomena** in Kosovo's digital space, they are systemic, persistent, and emotionally potent. Addressing them will require **coordinated efforts across civil society, tech platforms, media regulators, and education systems**. Until then, the targets, ethnic minorities, women, religious figures, political dissenters, remain vulnerable to coordinated online aggression.





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