



MONITORING REPORT ON HATE SPEECH IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

2025

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MAIDA SALKANOVIĆ



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Civil Society for Shared Society
in the Western Balkans



Reporting
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Introduction

As a post-conflict society marked by ongoing political, social, and economic changes, Bosnia and Herzegovina remains especially vulnerable to hate speech rooted in ethnonationalist identities. Although different forms of hate speech are present, ethnically driven rhetoric is particularly prominent. According to the [2024 Freedom House report](#), the country continues to be characterized by “severe partisan gridlock among nationalist leaders from the Bosniak, Serb, and Croat communities.”

Although Bosnia and Herzegovina has ratified all major international instruments that directly or indirectly address freedom of expression and hate speech, this phenomenon is often misinterpreted, rarely subject to criminal prosecution, and there are no comprehensive official statistics. In a society already deeply polarised along ethnonational lines, hate speech risks deepening divisions further: targeted groups [often respond](#) by reinforcing their own ethnonational identities and becoming less willing to engage with other communities.

The online sphere adds an additional dimension to this challenge. Digital spaces are neither clearly defined nor sufficiently regulated, allowing hateful content to remain visible, be reshared, and resurface long after its initial publication. In a climate of political and social instability, such persistent online hate speech can play a significant role in mobilising groups and inciting hostility or violence.

In recent years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has also experienced a steady decline in media freedom and democracy indicators. The COVID-19 pandemic, accompanied by an infodemic, further eroded public trust in institutions and the media, creating fertile ground for the spread of harmful narratives.

This report examines incidents of hate speech recorded between 1 January 2024 and 30 June 2025, identifying recurring narratives, shifts in targets, and notable trigger events. It aims to highlight broader trends in hate speech, analyse their underlying drivers, and situate them within the wider geopolitical and social context in which they unfold.



Methodology

This report applies the methodological framework developed for previous Reporting Diversity Network 2.0 (RDN 2.0) monitoring cycles, combining quantitative and qualitative content analysis to examine hate and discriminatory discourse (HDD) in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the observed period. The approach is designed to identify patterns, targets, and triggers of HDD, and to provide evidence-based insights for addressing and countering such narratives. It follows the Council of Europe's *WE CAN!* conceptualisation of “narratives” as coherent interpretations of events and actors that help sustain, reinforce, or challenge political and social power structures.

The analysis encompasses a broad definition of hate speech, extending beyond legally proscribed forms (such as incitement to hatred) to include any form of public communication targeting individuals or groups based on personal or group characteristics, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and migrant or refugee status.

Data Collection

Monitoring was conducted through:

- > **Non-selective searches** for media content, public statements, and online posts containing HDD.
- > **Targeted monitoring** of identified high-impact actors and outlets, such as politicians, journalists, influencers, and media platforms, known for disseminating hate speech.

The monitored material included:

- > Oral and written statements by public figures
- > Journalistic articles, commentaries, and TV/radio segments
- > Social media posts and comments
- > Visual content (e.g., photographs, memes, symbols) carrying discriminatory messages

Recurring incidents, where the same individual or outlet repeatedly engaged in HDD, were tracked separately. While hate speech in comment sections was recorded, greater analytical focus was placed on content from influential actors and platforms due to their broader reach and agenda-setting power.

Coding and Classification

Each recorded case was coded by:

- > **Grounds of hate speech** (e.g., gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political affiliation, other)
- > **Type of action** (e.g., insult, negative group labelling/stereotyping, spreading misinformation, inflammatory speech, threats, incitement to violence, death threats)
- > **Actor category** (e.g., politician, journalist, influencer, private individual)
- > **Format** (online media, social media platform, broadcast media, print)

Cases involving multiple grounds (e.g., gender + political affiliation) were recorded under a “Multiple” category in the quantitative overview and subsequently disaggregated to reflect the total number of incidents targeting each specific group.

Narrative Analysis

Qualitative analysis identified main narratives and sub-narratives for each target category, examining the recurring frames, stereotypes, and justifications used to legitimize discriminatory attitudes. “Trigger events” were noted, such as political decisions, anniversaries, incidents, or other developments that prompted spikes in HDD. Where relevant, fact-checking sources and official denials were cited to flag false or misleading claims embedded in hate narratives.

Sentiment Analysis

Each case was scored on a 1–6 sentiment scale adapted from George Washington University:



The average sentiment score was calculated by summing individual scores and dividing by the number of scored cases. In a small number of cases, media reporting referred only to unspecified threats or insults; for these, sentiment assessment was conducted based on the limited available information. Examples of typical toxic language tokens were documented to illustrate the range and tone of rhetoric.

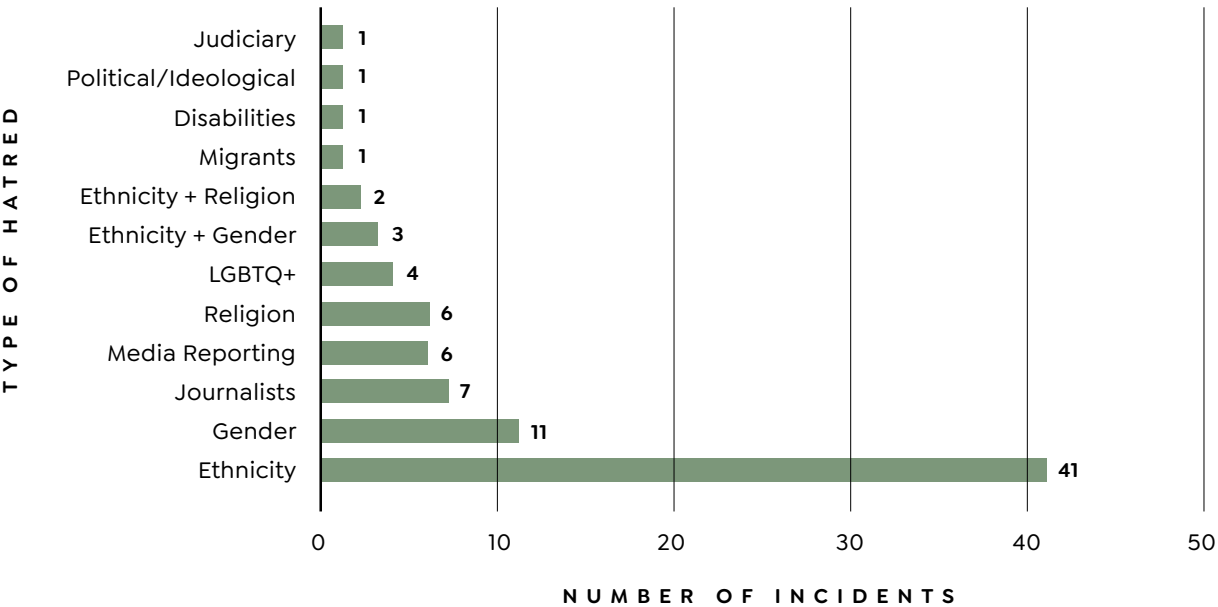
Limitations

The monitoring relied exclusively on publicly available content; private communications and closed online groups were not included. Given the high volume and speed of online discourse, some instances of HDD may have been missed. Additionally, prioritising the influence of the source means that certain forms of grassroots hate speech are underrepresented in the dataset.

Quantitative analysis

Between January 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025, the monitoring recorded 78 incidents of hate speech in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with the most prevalent being hatred based on ethnicity. A total of 41 incidents (52.6%) were explicitly directed at ethnic groups, with an additional three (3.8%) combining ethnic and gender-based hatred, and three (3.8%) combining ethnic and religious hatred.

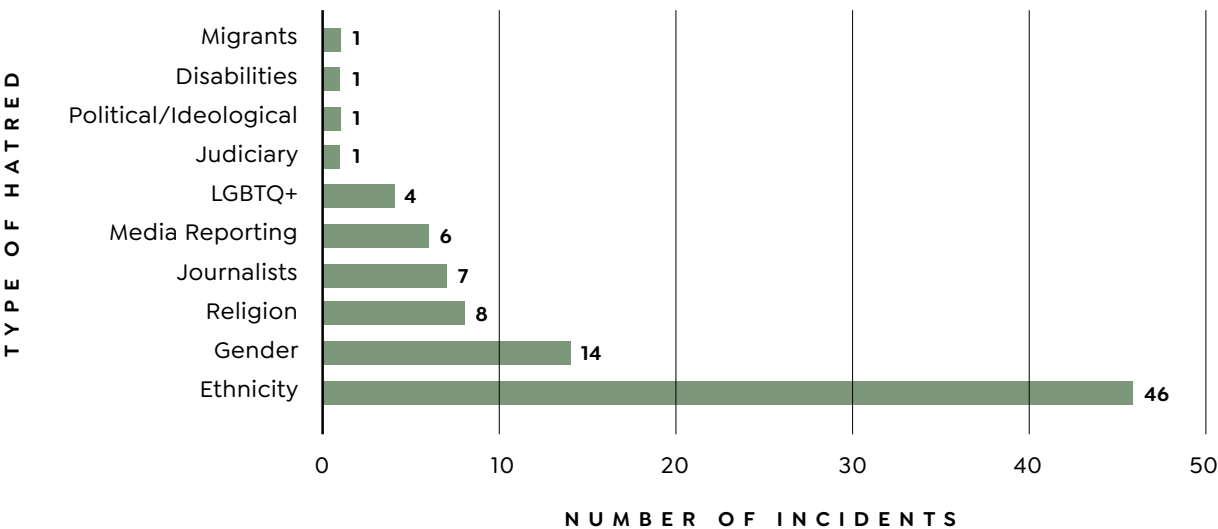
Graph 1. Hate Speech Incidents by Category; Multiple



Gender-based hatred was documented in 11 cases (14%), including the three already noted as intersecting with ethnicity. Two of these cases, involving public commentary on the interethnic marriage of two public figures, reflected both gendered and ethnic hate.

Religious hatred appeared in five cases (6.4%), two of which (2.6%) also had an ethnic dimension.

Chart 2: Hate Speech Incidents by Category; Redistributed



Journalists were targeted in seven cases (9%), pointing to ongoing hostility toward members of the press. Hate speech motivated by homophobia or directed at sexual minorities was recorded in four incidents (5%).

Isolated incidents of hate were also documented against political or ideological opponents (2.5%), migrants (1.3%), people with disabilities (1.3%), and against a member of the judiciary (1.3%).

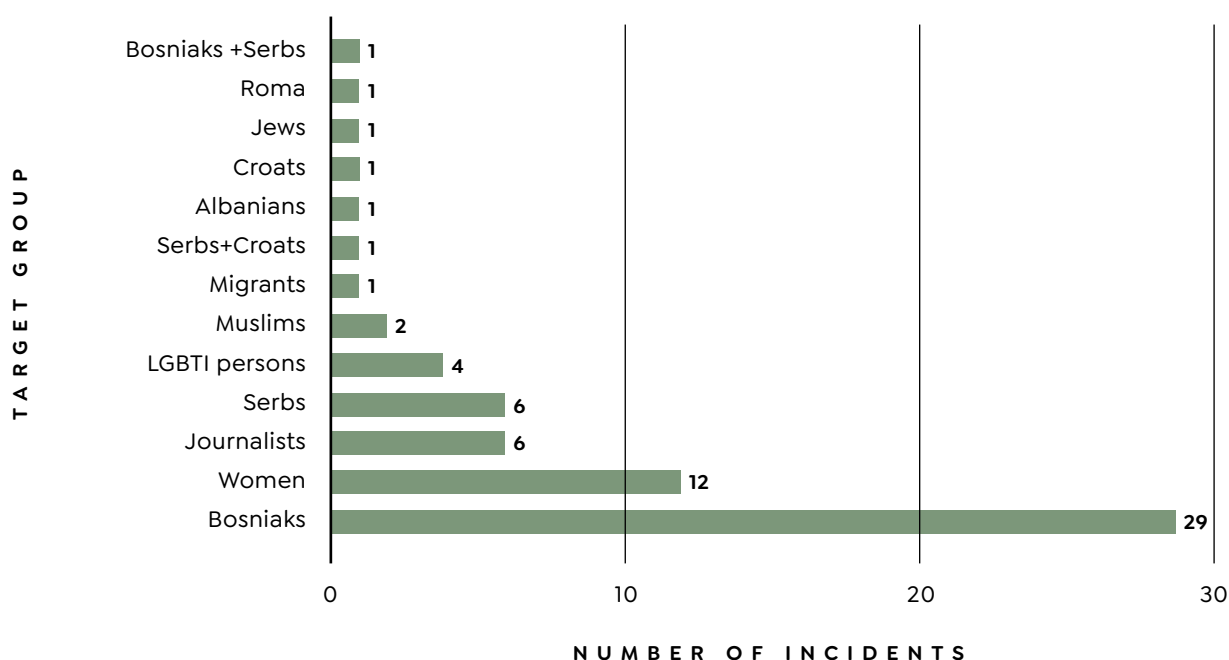
Additionally, six cases (7.7%) involved unprofessional media reporting that either amplified or reflected hateful narratives.

The targets of hate speech were not always straightforward to define, as some terms, such as “Bosniak” and “Muslim”, were used interchangeably. An example showing conflation of ethnic and religious identifiers in the perception of perpetrators is Dodik’s statement that “Muslims should convert to the Orthodox faith and then Serbs will be the majority.”

In some incidents, multiple identity-based insults were combined. For example, when Banjaluka-based travel blogger Robert Dacešin published a post on social media about textbooks in Republika Srpska and the alleged glorification of war criminals Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, a wave of insults followed. He was called derogatory names, including “Jew”, “ustaša”, and “Serb-hater”, combining ethnic, religious, and political slurs.

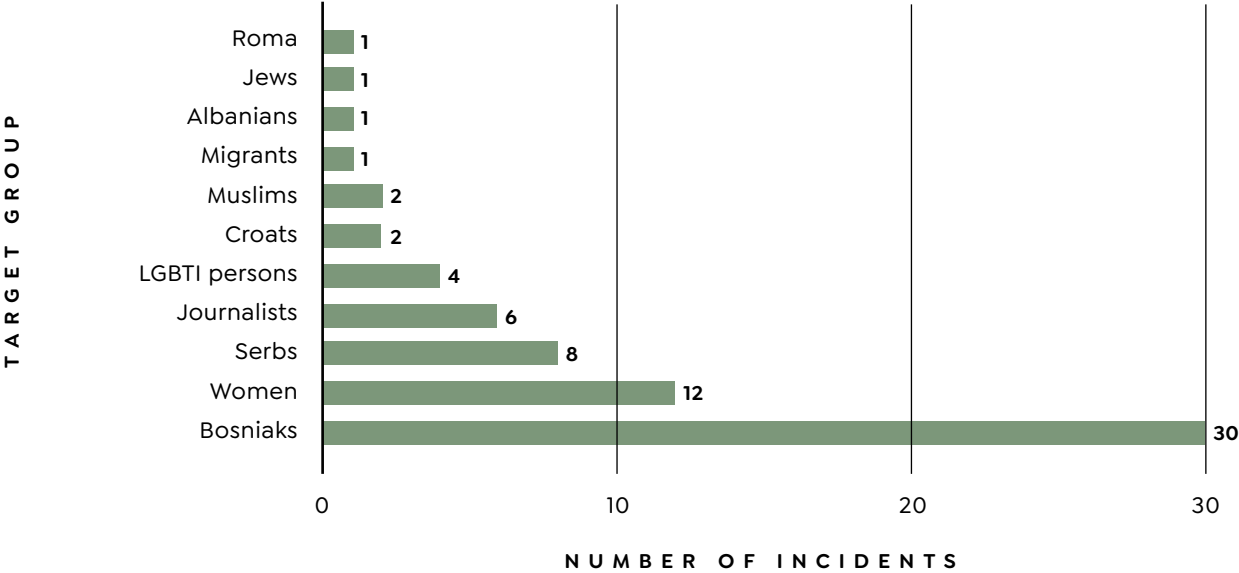
The most frequent targets were Bosniaks: 29 cases or 37%. This was followed by women in 12 cases (15%), Serbs and journalists in 6 cases each (7.7%), LGBTQ+ persons in 4 cases (5%). One case was against Bosniaks and Serbs. Muslims were specifically targeted in 2 cases (2.6%). Additional instances of ethnic hate speech included one case each against Roma, Jews, Croats, and Albanians (1.3% each). One case was against both Serbs and Croats. There was also one case (1.3%) targeting migrants. One case targeted a meteorologist who is frequently subjected to hate speech, reflecting broader anti-science and anti-fact sentiment and a travel blogger, assigning him identities that do not describe him.

Graph 3: Number of Hate Speech Incidents by Target; Multiple



1. The *Ustaša* was a Croatian fascist and ultranationalist movement that ruled the Nazi- and Fascist-backed Independent State of Croatia (NDH) during World War II, responsible for mass atrocities against Serbs, Jews, Roma, and others. In today’s regional context, the term is often used as a derogatory label for Croats.

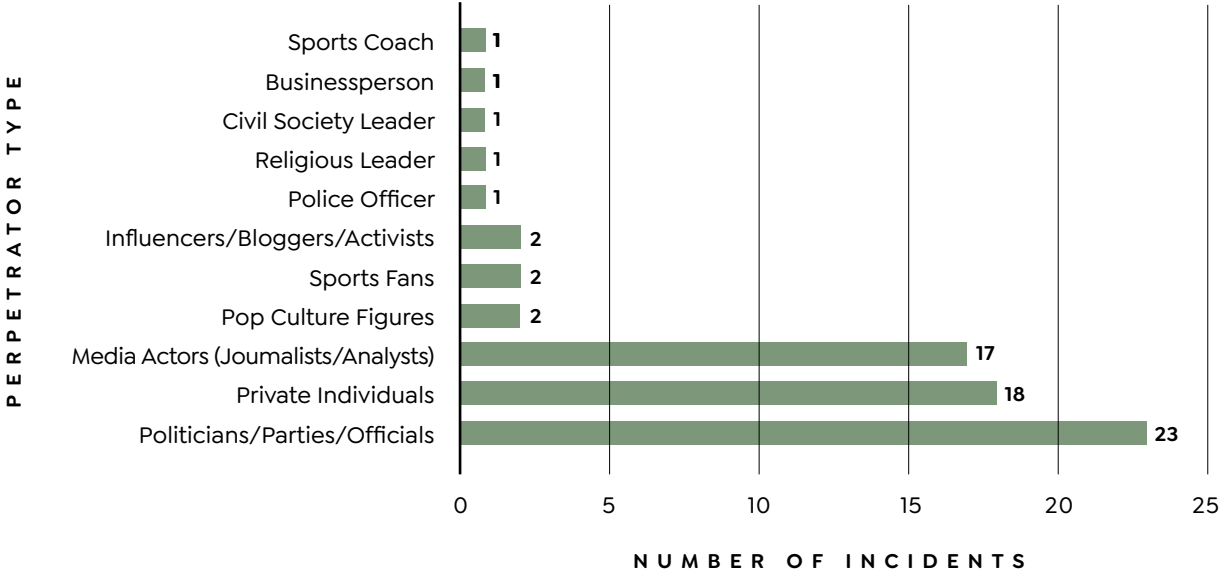
Graph 4: Number of Hate Speech Incidents by Target; Redistributed



Some cases involved intersectional hate speech, where more than one identity was targeted simultaneously. For example, two cases involving public commentary on the interethnic marriage of well-known public figures combined gendered and ethnic hate.

Out of the 78 recorded incidents, the largest share, 24 cases (30.8%), were perpetrated by politicians, political parties, and state officials. Private individuals were responsible for 18 cases (23%), while journalists, media personnel, media writers, and analysts accounted for 17 cases (22%), showing that media actors were both frequent targets and perpetrators of hate speech. Influencers, bloggers, and social media activists were involved in 2 cases (2.6%), as were sports fans and celebrities or popular culture figures. Other perpetrator types, including sportscoaches, businesspeople, civil society and religious leaders, and police officers, appeared only once each (1.3% per category).

Chart 5: Number of Hate Speech Incidents by Perpetrator Type



Narratives and Sub-narratives

Ethnic/Religious Hate

Ethnic hate was the most dominant narrative in the reporting period, with over half of all recorded incidents involving ethnically motivated rhetoric. The majority of this rhetoric targeted members of the three constitutional peoples: Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, reflecting the persistent influence of ethno-national divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Local elections in October 2024 served as a major trigger, with nationalist rhetoric intensifying during campaign periods as political actors sought to mobilize voters along ethnic lines. In many cases, ethnic hate was conflated with religious prejudice, as ethnic and religious identifiers are frequently used interchangeably in the Bosnian context. This allowed discriminatory rhetoric to operate across both identity dimensions simultaneously.

Bosniaks were the most frequently targeted group, which directly connects this narrative to the genocide denial narrative discussed in the following section. The denial or relativization of the Srebrenica genocide often provides a framework in which anti-Bosniak sentiment is expressed.

In one high-profile case, the marriage of Bosnian Serb politician Milan Tegeltija and Bosniak TV presenter Amina Bešić sparked a wave of online abuse. Comments portrayed their relationship as a betrayal of their respective ethnic groups, often accompanied by derogatory ethnic and religious slurs. Another case involved singer Božo Vrećo, known for performing *sevdalinka*, a traditional Bosnian musical genre. Vrećo, who is also a member of the LGBTIQ+ community, is a frequent target of online hostility. In this instance, a Muslim religious leader accused him of “appropriating” *sevdalinkas* a Serb living in Bosnia. This example demonstrates how cultural heritage could be used to police ethnic boundaries and exclude individuals based on identity.

Overall, this narrative perpetuates the politicization of ethnicity, reinforces rigid ethno-religious boundaries, and deepens mistrust between communities. It frames personal relationships, cultural expression, and even public events through an ethnic lens, keeping division at the core of both political discourse and everyday social interactions.

Genocide Denial

The most significant and divisive trigger during the reporting period was the adoption of the [United Nations \(UN\) General Assembly resolution on the Srebrenica genocide](#) on May 23, 2024. The resolution designated 11 July as the *International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica* and condemned both genocide denial and the glorification of individuals convicted of war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide. Serbia opposed the resolution, calling it “highly politicized,” [according to the UN](#).

While the anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide traditionally prompts a surge of hate speech, 2024 saw an especially high level of denial narratives due to the political controversy surrounding the resolution. Political actors, particularly from Republika Srpska, framed it as a threat to Serb identity and an attack on the entity’s political autonomy. One of the most widespread narratives claimed that the resolution branded all Serbs as genocidal. One of the incidents documented in this report also expressed such a sentiment. In June 2024, the word “*genocidaši*”, meaning “those who committed genocide”, was graffitied on the Serbian Embassy in Sarajevo. However, the resolution contains no such language or suggestion, nor was this interpretation widely accepted among the general population.

For context, in 2021, then-High Representative Valentin Inzko imposed amendments to the Criminal Code of Bosnia and Herzegovina prohibiting genocide denial and the glorification of war criminals. Despite this, the monitoring period revealed repeated acts in direct opposition to these provisions.

Sub-narratives:

- 1 **Relativization and historical revisionism** – downplaying the scope of the genocide, questioning the number of victims, or equating Srebrenica with other wartime events to diminish its significance.
- 2 **Non-reconciliation rhetoric** – rejecting acknowledgment of crimes and framing calls for remembrance as hostile or politically motivated acts. Additionally, Serbian victims are often remembered in opposition to Bosniak victims, rather than being recognized in their own right. This approach suggests that Republika Srpska leaders instrumentalize these victims to incite hate and perpetuate ethnic division, rather than work toward genuine recognition and acknowledgment of all conflict victims.
- 3 **Glorification of convicted war criminals** – portraying individuals found guilty by international courts as “heroes” or “defenders of the Serb people,” which implicitly dehumanizes Bosniak victims.
- 4 **Serbsians portrayed as a genocidal nation** – the interpretation that the Srebrenica resolution labels Serbs as a genocidal people mostly originated from the political leadership in Republika Srpska and Serbia. However, an incident in June 2024, when the word “*genocidaši*” (“those who committed genocide”) was graffitied on the Serbian Embassy in Sarajevo, shows that this rhetoric also took root among the wider population.

This narrative reflects a persistent pattern of institutionalized denial within certain political structures, especially in Republika Srpska.

Gender

Gender-based hatred emerged as a distinct narrative during the monitoring period, reflecting the persistent anti-woman sentiment present in Bosnian society. While some incidents were explicitly rooted in misogyny, in many cases gendered slurs were used as a rhetorical weapon when the perpetrator was in fact angered by another dimension of the target’s identity, such as their profession, political affiliation, or ethnicity.

Among the triggers were cases of femicides, which often prompted public debate and media coverage. In 2024, there were 12 recorded cases of intimate partner femicide in the country, which is around the same annual average [documented over the past five years](#). These tragedies were often reported in a way that sensationalized the violence, stripped it of its gendered context, or even implied victim-blaming. Unprofessional and tabloid-style reporting not only failed to contribute to prevention or public awareness but also amplified harmful stereotypes and normalized misogyny. Headlines and narratives framing femicide as an individual incidence were recurrent, obscuring the reality of gender-based violence as a systemic problem.

Gendered language was also used to discredit women in public life. A telling example came from then-President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, who referred to a journalist from N1 television as “that cow from N1” – a gender-based insult intended to demean her. While the immediate trigger for his remark was her role as a member of the press questioning him, the insult relied on misogynistic language, reducing her to a sexist stereotype rather than addressing her professional work.

Attempts to silence women through gender stereotypes can also be seen in the case of political analyst Ivana Marić. A professor and politician referred to her as a “starlet” in a post on his X account, sharing her photograph alongside two women who are frequently mocked in public discourse and criticized for their perceived “immorality”. As noted in a 2025 [report on gendered disinformation](#), “this framing not only undermined the analyst’s professional credibility but also introduced sexualized connotations to discredit her.”

Overall, gender-based hatred in this period operated both as a standalone prejudice and as an amplifier for other hostilities. It targeted women for stepping outside of traditionally prescribed roles, whether by holding political office, working in journalism, or challenging patriarchal norms, and it was sustained not only by political figures but also by media practices that fail to uphold ethical standards in reporting on violence against women.

Journalists and Outspoken Individuals

Seven recorded cases of hate speech targeted journalists, illustrating a continued decline in media freedoms and a hostile environment for independent voices. Some of these incidents originated from highly positioned public figures, reinforcing a culture in which criticism of those in power is delegitimized through personal attacks rather than substantive rebuttal. Hate speech in these cases often acts as an informal enforcement mechanism of prevailing cultural and political norms, discouraging speech that challenges dominant narratives.

One example is Franjo Šarčević, editor of online media outlet *Prometej*, who faced escalating hostility, including death threats, after criticizing the instrumentalization of children for nationalist purposes and commenting on the political situation. In this period, he received ethnically charged threats, fueled in part by his Croat-sounding name, after criticizing the Sarajevo mayor for posing with a boy in a Bosnian Army uniform, which he argued reinforced a war-glorifying discourse. Šarčević, often accused of speaking “against” one group or another depending on the context, illustrates how Bosnia and Herzegovina’s polarized environment rarely tolerates reasoning outside ethno-nationalist lines. Following this latest wave of threats, he fled the country.

This dynamic also works in reverse: when individuals criticize members of their own perceived group, it is often treated as an act of betrayal. For instance, travel blogger Robert Dacešin faced a wave of insults, including ethnic and religious slurs, after criticizing the content of school textbooks in Republika Srpska and the alleged glorification of war criminals. His case shows how in polarized contexts, legitimate dissent can be recast as disloyalty, triggering collective hostility.

The case of meteorologist Nedim Sladić provides yet another example. Sladić has been a recurring target of online abuse for his public commentary on weather patterns, work that, on its face, has no political dimension. His targeting reflects a broader anti-science and anti-fact sentiment in society, which has been amplified since the Covid-19 pandemic, when disinformation surged and public trust in institutions eroded. In this environment, even factual, evidence-based communication can provoke hostility if it is perceived to challenge personal beliefs or politically convenient narratives.

Together, these cases show how journalists, analysts, and other outspoken individuals are policed in the public sphere, not only for what they say, but for whether their speech aligns with the entrenched ethno-political divisions. This environment narrows the space for independent thought, weakens democratic debate, and normalizes personal attacks as a tool for silencing dissent.

Fascist Iconography

Several incidents involved the use of iconography linked to the WWII-era Ustaša movement or Nazi symbols.

In Neum, where Croats form the majority, a Bosniak-owned bakery was targeted with graffiti including “*Za dom spremni*” (the Ustaša salute), “*Gazi balije*” (“trample Muslims,” with *balija*² used as a slur for Bosniaks), and “*Herceg Bosna*” (a reference to the wartime para-state). The owner stated the messages were intended to intimidate Bosniaks and drive them out of the town.

In Mostar, a group of young people appeared on stage at a nightclub in Nazi uniforms, using Nazi symbols and salutes, with one individual reportedly dressed as Adolf Hitler.

Croatian singer Marko Perković Thompson released a song about the 1990s war in Croatia that included hostile lyrics toward both Serbs and Bosniaks. Thompson is frequently glorifying the Ustaša movement and the Nazi-backed Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna država Hrvatska – NDH) in his music.

The Croatian Party of Rights (HSP) also employed the Ustaša salute on a pre-election poster. Bosnia and Herzegovina’s Central Election Commission sanctioned the party with a fine of 30,000 KM for hate speech during the campaign.

2. *Balija* is a derogatory term historically used for Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). While originally a colloquial word with rural connotations, it has been weaponized in the regional context as an ethnic slur, often appearing in hate speech and ethnonationalist rhetoric.

Sentiment Analysis

An average sentiment score is 3.26, which corresponds (score 3) to *negative character*: non-violent characterizations and insults. This marks a notable increase from last year's average of 2.48, indicating a significant intensification in hateful rhetoric in the online public space.

The minimum sentiment score assigned was 1, for the case of media reporting about the suicide of a female police officer, which contained gendered elements of objectivization. The highest recorded score was 6, linked to a direct death threat against Bosniak returnees in Foča, a town in southeastern BiH within the Republika Srpska entity. On March 6, unidentified individuals threatened a returnee, saying they would “slaughter all of them (Bosniaks),” while also hurling insults and calling them “Turks,” a derogatory term for Bosniaks, or Bosnian Muslims. The incident was reported by Deputy Minister for Human Rights and Refugees Duška Jurišić, who shared the information on Facebook. Police were notified, and the victim temporarily fled the area.

The other incident rated 6 concerned threats directed at Saša Magazinović, Chairman of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly's Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), following the vote on Kosovo's admission to the Council of Europe. Magazinović reported receiving daily threats, some of which he shared on platform X, including: “*When are they going to kill him*” and “*Please God, let him eat his children roasted on Christmas or Eid*”, and calling him “*a traitor of the Serbian kind*”, and “*ustaša*,” and others praising “*a bullet*”. Adding to the hostility, Gorica Dodik, the daughter of Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik, with over 11,000 followers on X, labeled Magazinović a “*traitor who voted for the admission of self-proclaimed Kosovo to the Council of Europe*.”

Nine incidents were rated 5, most with an ethnonational dimension against different groups. At a football match between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Hungary in Zenica, fans of both sides chanted “*Kill, kill the Serb*”, a slogan aimed broadly at Serbs. In Neum, a Bosniak-owned bakery was targeted with Ustaša graffiti directed against Bosniaks. In Sarajevo, vandals graffitied the Manja bakery, owned by a Bosnian Serb, with “*sve vas je manje*” (“there are increasingly fewer of you”), while the Zlatno Zrno bakery faced a boycott call after its owner made a cake in the colors of the Republika Srpska flag, prompting online comments with threats such as “*We know what needs to be done with these chetniks³*,” a derogatory term for Serbians. In Vlasenica, Bosniak returnees were intimidated with warning shots fired into the air.

Visibility Analysis

The comment sections on social media platforms and online media remained the primary channels for disseminating hate speech. Posts by politicians, media outlets, and influencers often sparked large volumes of hateful comments, further amplifying the narratives. In some cases, statements from public figures were republished across multiple outlets, circulating widely through shares, screenshots, and memes, ensuring visibility beyond the original audience.

3. *Četnici* were Serbian nationalist and royalist paramilitary formations, most active during World War II, some of which collaborated with Axis powers and committed war crimes against non-Serb populations. In today's regional context, *četnik* is also widely used as a derogatory term for Serbs.

Comparative Analysis

The majority of recorded cases contained some element of ethnonationalist division. Even when other factors, such as gender, were predominant, an ethnic dimension was often present. This reflects the strong polarisation in society and the pervasive “*us versus them*” sentiment observed across all categories.

In the previous reporting period, gender was the most frequent ground for hate speech, followed by ethnicity. Anti-LGBTIQ+ rhetoric was also more prominent last year, which was expected given that the monitoring period included a high-profile attack on LGBTIQ+ activists in Banjaluka and heightened visibility when residents believed the Pride March would be held in the city.

In this period, hate speech incidents against LGBTIQ+ individuals were significantly fewer, with only four incidents recorded compared to 17 last year. These were primarily linked to trigger events such as the Sarajevo Pride March and the election period. As noted in a [2024 report on gender- and identity-based information](#), LGBTIQ+ issues are sometimes instrumentalised to mobilise voters, serving as an “easy target” for nationalist politicians seeking to rally their base.

Hate speech targeting migrants also continued to decline: only one incident was recorded, compared to four last year and 12 the year before.

While a substantial number of recorded comments originated from public figures, private individuals were also highly active in producing and disseminating hate speech, particularly in comment sections on social media platforms. This occurred despite users posting under their real identities rather than anonymously.

Actions Against Hate Speech

Over the past year, several legal, institutional, and civil society initiatives addressed hate speech in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although enforcement remains uneven.

A landmark development was the [first court conviction for genocide denial](#) in the country’s history. In May 2025, Vojin Pavlović, leader of a Bosnian Serb NGO, was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison for denying the Srebrenica genocide and glorifying Ratko Mladić. Earlier this year, Milorad Dodik was [convicted for defying a decision of the High Representative](#) and received a one-year prison sentence along with a six-year ban from public office, although this case was not prosecuted under hate speech provisions, but provided some sort of accountability for the high profile leader.

At the policy level, Bosnia and Herzegovina [continued cooperation](#) with the EU and Council of Europe under the *Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye* programme (2023–2026), aimed at strengthening institutional capacity to counter hate speech and discrimination. The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, in partnership with the Atlantic Initiative, [published](#) *Motivation and Typology of Incitement to Hatred Offenders and Words That Hurt: Consequences of Hate Speech in BiH*, offering practical tools for state institutions, law enforcement, and civil society.

The Central Electoral Commission [fined](#) Milorad Dodik for anti-LGBTIQ+ remarks he used at a rally and two political parties, SDA and HSP were fined for hate speech during the pre-election campaign.

Conclusion

Bosnia and Herzegovina, often described as a society built on the coexistence of three main ethnonational groups, remains deeply polarized and divided. The 30th anniversary of both the genocide in Srebrenica and the end of the war brought heightened international attention and prompted reflection on the country's post-war trajectory. These commemorations inevitably highlighted the weaknesses of the current political and societal framework, triggering strong emotional and political reactions. The adoption of the Srebrenica genocide resolution at the United Nations was particularly divisive, triggering a surge of hate speech, much of it from political figures.

Political leaders remain the main promoters of hate speech, setting the tone for public discourse. Despite laws prohibiting the glorification of war criminals, such acts occur frequently, underscoring a culture of impunity in which accountability is rare and violations are normalized. Recent developments, most notably the conviction of Milorad Dodik, a frequent perpetrator of hate speech documented in this report, have challenged this impunity to some extent. Dodik was punished for failing to implement a decision of the High Representative, Christian Schmidt, an offense that resulted in a six-year ban from holding public office. However, the ruling was widely framed by his supporters as an attack on Serbs rather than an act of individual accountability, reinforcing existing patterns of polarization and ethnic division. In this environment, independent thinking is discouraged, and dissenting voices are punished. Criticism of political figures is almost always filtered through the lens of ethnonational belonging, while freedom of expression is increasingly undermined by hate speech, leading many to self-censor or withdraw from public discourse altogether.

The persistence of ethnonationalist hate speech is particularly of interest in light of the separatist rhetoric from Republika Srpska's leadership, recurring [references](#) to the possibility of future armed conflict, and the significant influence that neighbouring Serbia continues to exert on Bosnia and Herzegovina's politics and media. Another narrative important to observe is the occurrence of incidents involving fascist symbols and terminology, especially in the light of the rise of rightist ideologies worldwide.

Anti-gender hate speech further reveals a society in which women who challenge traditional gender roles face hostility, and misogyny remains deeply ingrained. Gender-based violence is often relativized, mocked, or trivialized, reflecting not only domestic attitudes but also aligning with broader global trends of anti-gender movements and retraditionalization. These factors make it unlikely that such rhetoric will diminish in the near future.

In some cases, the media are the perpetrators of hate speech, sometimes unintentionally, as a result of low professional standards or a lack of awareness about gender issues. This further erodes public trust and perpetuates harmful narratives. Certain actions against hate speech were recorded over the past year, particularly in the legal sphere. While these represent an important step forward, they also generated significant friction and backlash. For example, the fines imposed on Milorad Dodik for anti-LGBTIQ+ remarks and the first court conviction for genocide denial in Bosnia and Herzegovina are welcome developments. However, they were widely framed by their opponents as attacks on an entire community rather than as measures addressing individual responsibility.

No recorded cases appeared to use content generated with artificial intelligence (AI), or at least none were identified as such. Given the growing capabilities of AI tools to create, amplify, and tailor hateful narratives, their use in the context of hate speech in Bosnia and Herzegovina should be expected in the coming years.



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