

What is hate speech?

Article 20

International Covenant on
Civil and Political Rights

2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

Freedom of expression is fundamental to a healthy society. Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference. However, when necessary, free speech may have limits to protect the rights of others.

Hateful speech can be tolerated when it does not put others at risk.

However, hate speech becomes a human rights violation when it incites discrimination, hostility or violence, especially with regard to national, racial, ethnic, racial, gender or minority identities

Addressing hate speech

Often when we see a hateful message the first reaction is to say it is not true, it is non-logical, it is wrong, it is a generalisation, a lie, manipulative, needs to be challenged, etc.

You may not know how to respond. There is a risk that we might reply to hate with hate and reinforce polarisation, or that our response is not effective.

There are different ways to address hate speech:

- 1) Counter hate speech directly
- 2) Create alternative narratives

In both cases: using a human-rights based approach will promote the values of a fair and inclusive society.

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-speech/>

Countering hate speech directly

5 Steps

Based on the “Council of Europe Toolkit for developing human rights-based narratives Step-by-step guide”

<https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-speech/>

1. Identify your reactions, emotions, and values.
2. Analyse the hate speech and understand the narrative
3. Decide what you want to do: a counter-message or an alternative narrative?
4. Prepare your human rights messaging
5. Write your human rights-based message

Step 1: Identify your reactions, emotions and values

A response is more likely to be effective when planned, so that it reaches the right audience, and sends the right message.

It helps to take time to respond and these steps can help.

Based on: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-speech/>

Take a moment to review:

- What is your first reaction?
- What about the message hurts?
- Why does the message make you feel this way?
- What human rights principles do you feel are being violated?
- What values are being triggered in you?



Step 2: Analysing hate speech and the narrative

Example:

“They are not the original people and should be removed”

- What makes this comment hate speech? *It incites discrimination and hostility, perhaps also violence.*
- What is really being said and to whom? *Context is everything.*

What narrative does it feed into?

- *It may feed into a narrative of superiority, of blaming ‘newcomers’*

Which stereotypes or prejudices is it based on?

- *It is based on ethnic or community stereotyping*

Which human rights are affected?

- *Right to equality, equal treatment, non-discrimination*

What is the context that allows this narrative to exist?

- *The context can be one of one group seeking to enforce its domination over a territory*

Step 3: Deciding what you want to do. What do you want to say?

1. Counter-message

A counter-messages is a short and direct reaction

- It aims to stop what is being said
- It aims to reach those who may sympathise with extremist views, preventing their further development
- It can be used to directly de-construct, discredit and demystify extremist messages

2. Alternative narrative

An alternative narrative does not counter directly the hate speech directly, instead it aims to strengthen an alternative truth or story

- It supports alternative thinking
- It focuses on what we are “for” rather than “against”
- It aims to change the framework of the discussion
- It is aimed at general population

Step 4: Preparing your narrative and messaging

Preparing the message

Strong messages are built on a clear narrative or story

- What is your narrative?
- What do you want to change?
- Who do you want to reach?
- What is the message we want to pass on?
- How is it linked to human rights?
- Will it improve an increased understanding and culture of human rights?

Based on: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-speech/>

A human rights-based narrative demonstrates the universality of human rights.

- **The aim is to promote alternative ways of thinking about society**
- **It should not include hate, name calling, stereotyping, discrimination or scapegoating**
- **It should promote, protect and increase rights and opportunities for all, not just for one group**
- **It should not reinforce an 'ingroup' and an 'outgroup', or divisions between "us" and "them", or between 'superiors' and 'inferiors'.**
- **Write a short paragraph of your main ideas**

Step 5: Writing the human rights-based narrative or message

Example:

“They are not the original people and should be removed”

Key words from my analysis:

- Superiority → **all peoples have rich histories**
- Discrimination → **equality**
- “Otherness” → **Shared needs**

“We all have rich histories and multiple identities, but most importantly we all share the same needs for love and security.”

Tips for writing your message

- **Pick out your key words**
- **Make it clear, specific, to the point**
- **Make it catchy**
- **Make it positive**
- **Bring out the underlying values you want to promote**
- **Which human rights does it celebrate?**
- **Does it empower?**
- **Make sure it is not harmful to anyone**
- **Make sure it is “for” and not “against”**
- **Does it enrich dialogue?**