Asociacioni i Gazetarëve të Kosovës
Association of Journalists of Kosovo

Media Monitoring & Hate Speech Analysis Report

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Author:
Jeton Mehmeti
Researcher:
Marigona Berisha

Monitoring hate speech, disinformation, and polarizing discourse across broadcast, online news, and social media in Albanian and Serbian language media

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01 Executive Summary

02 Methodology & Severity Framework

03 Key Findings Overview

04 Analysis by Medium Type

05 Severity Distribution

06 Speaker & Target Analysis

07 Narrative Frames & Emotional Tone

08 Case Studies & Notable Quotes

09 Recommendations

10 Appendix: Classification Guide

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a three-month monitoring exercise on hate speech and harmful discourse in Kosovo's media environment conducted between March and May 2026. The monitoring covered television broadcasts, online news portals, social media platforms, and other publicly accessible sources in both Albanian and Serbian languages. The objective was to identify, document, and analyze patterns of hate speech and harmful discourse, assess their severity, and examine their implications for media freedom, democratic debate, and social cohesion.

The monitoring identified a total of 138 cases of hate speech and harmful discourse. While the report focuses on hate speech, it adopts a broader analytical approach than the legal definition contained in Article 141 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo. In addition to potentially unlawful forms of hate speech, the monitoring examined hostile rhetoric, delegitimization, demonization, stereotyping, conspiracy narratives, anti-journalist rhetoric, and other forms of communication that may contribute to polarization, discrimination, hostility, or mistrust.

The findings reveal that political and ideological harmful discourse was by far the most prevalent category, accounting for 99 of the 138 documented cases (71.7%). Unlike traditional forms of hate speech that often target vulnerable groups, this category was largely characterized by hostile exchanges between political actors and public figures, who frequently portrayed opponents as traitors, enemies, foreign agents, or threats to national interests. Political hostility was particularly visible in Prime-Time television debates and was subsequently amplified through online news portals and social media platforms. The monitoring found that political polarization remains the primary driver of harmful discourse in Kosovo's contemporary media environment.

The analysis also identified important differences between Albanian- and Serbian-language media. Of the total documented cases, 107 originated in Albanian-language media (77.5%) and 31 in Serbian-language media (22.5%). Albanian-language discourse was dominated by political confrontation and personalized attacks, while Serbian-language discourse more frequently incorporated narratives of collective victimization, ethnic insecurity, and perceived threats to the Serbian community.

In addition to political and ethnic narratives, the monitoring documented cases involving anti-journalist rhetoric, gender-based and identity-based harmful discourse. Although these categories were less prevalent, they highlight continuing challenges related to media freedom, equality, and inclusion. The report also found a significant overlap between harmful discourse, conspiracy narratives, and digital amplification, with social media playing a central role in extending the reach and visibility of inflammatory content.

The severity analysis indicates that most documented cases involved offensive, hostile, or delegitimizing communication rather than direct incitement. Of the 138 cases recorded, 64 were classified as Level 1, 40 as Level 2, and 28 as Level 3, while six cases were assessed at the highest severity levels (Levels 4 and 5). Although the most severe cases were relatively rare, the monitoring shows that harmful rhetoric involving demonization, exclusion, and threats continues to appear in Kosovo's media environment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report concludes that the principal challenge is not the widespread presence of explicit hate speech as defined under criminal law, but rather the normalization of hostile, stigmatizing, and delegitimizing forms of communication that contribute to polarization and undermine the quality of public debate. The findings further demonstrate that digital media ecosystems frequently amplify such discourse, increasing its visibility and societal impact.

To address these challenges, the report recommends strengthening professional journalistic standards, improving moderation and editorial practices, promoting responsible political communication, enhancing monitoring of harmful discourse in broadcast and online media, and expanding media literacy and counter-speech initiatives. Particular recommendations are directed toward the Independent Media Commission, the Press Council of Kosovo, media organizations, political actors, civil society organizations, and educational institutions.

Overall, the report highlights the importance of continued monitoring and coordinated action to foster a media environment that supports democratic dialogue, media freedom, mutual respect, and social cohesion in Kosovo.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Hate speech, harmful narratives, and other forms of hostile discourse have become increasingly visible in contemporary media environments. While freedom of expression remains a fundamental democratic value, communication that promotes hostility, discrimination, or hatred can undermine social cohesion, democratic debate, and respect for human rights.

In Kosovo, a diverse media landscape consisting of broadcasters, online news portals, and social media platforms plays an important role in shaping public opinion and political discourse. At the same time, political polarization, ethnic sensitivities, misinformation, and declining trust in institutions create conditions in which harmful narratives can spread and gain visibility.

Recent years have seen growing concerns about hostile political rhetoric, attacks on journalists, ethnic polarization, gender-based abuse, and the use of disinformation to reinforce divisive narratives. Social media platforms have further amplified these challenges by enabling the rapid dissemination of inflammatory content.

To better understand these trends, the Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AJK), conducted this monitoring exercise to document and analyze hate speech and harmful discourse in Kosovo's media environment. The findings aim to support media accountability, ethical journalism, and informed policy discussions.

1.2 Objectives of the Monitoring Exercise

The monitoring exercise sought to identify, document, classify, and analyze cases of hate speech and harmful discourse across Kosovo's media landscape.

Specifically, the monitoring aimed to:

- Identify cases of hate speech and harmful discourse in traditional media, online news portals, and social media;
- Analyze key trends and narratives, including political, ethnic, religious, gender-based, and anti-journalist harmful speech;
- Assess the severity and potential impact of documented cases;
- Compare patterns across Albanian- and Serbian-language media;
- Examine the relationship between harmful discourse, political polarization, disinformation, and digital amplification;
- Provide recommendations for journalists, media outlets, regulators, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders.

1.3 Scope of Monitoring

The monitoring covered the period from March to May 2026 and included content published or broadcast in Albanian and Serbian languages across:

- Television news and current affairs programmes;
- Online news portals and digital media outlets;
- Social media platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and X.

A total of 138 cases of hate speech and harmful discourse were documented and analyzed. Each case was classified according to its type, platform, language, narrative characteristics, and severity level.

The monitoring examined both explicit forms of hate speech and broader forms of harmful communication, including delegitimization, demonization, stereotyping, conspiracy narratives, fear-based messaging, and other forms of discourse that contribute to hostility, discrimination, or social division.

2. Methodology

2.1 Monitoring Framework

This monitoring exercise was designed to identify, document, classify, and analyze hate speech and harmful discourse across Kosovo's media environment. The methodology drew on internationally recognized approaches, including the United Nations Rabat Plan of Action and the hate speech intensity framework developed by Dr. Babak Bahador.

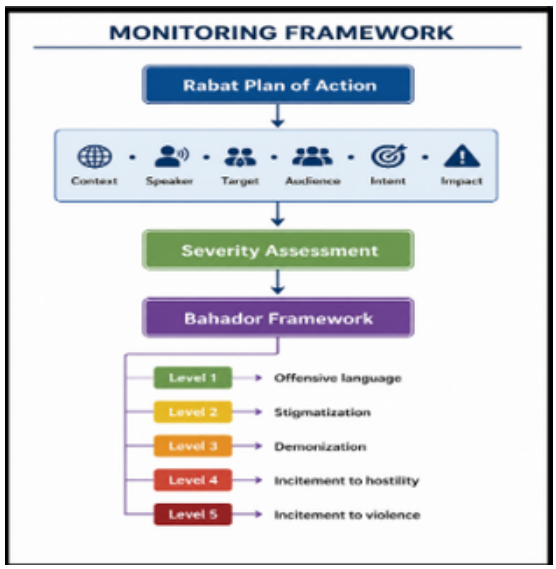
While the report focuses on hate speech and harmful discourse, it adopts a broader analytical approach than the legal definition contained in Article 141 of the Criminal Code of Kosovo. In addition to content that may meet legal thresholds for hate speech, the monitoring examined harmful forms of communication such as delegitimization, demonization, stereotyping, conspiracy narratives, anti-journalist rhetoric, and other narratives that contribute to hostility, discrimination, or social polarization.

The aim of this broader approach is to prevent harm rather than punish it. It recognizes that harmful discourse exists on a spectrum and can negatively affect public debate, media freedom, and social cohesion even when it does not break the law.

2.2 Legal and Institutional Framework

Kosovo's response to hate speech and harmful discourse is supported by several legal and institutional mechanisms. Article 141 of the Criminal Code criminalizes the public incitement of hatred, discord, or intolerance against protected groups when such conduct is likely to disturb public order.

The Independent Media Commission (IMC) regulates audiovisual media services, while the Press Council of Kosovo (PCK) promotes ethical standards through media self-regulation. The Ombudsperson Institution addresses discrimination and human rights concerns, and the Office of Good Governance (OGG) coordinates policies related to equality, inclusion, and non-discrimination. Together, these institutions play complementary roles in promoting responsible public communication.



2.3 Monitoring Scope and Data Collection

The monitoring covered the period from March to May 2026 and included publicly available content published or broadcast in Albanian and Serbian languages.

The sample included:

- Television news and current affairs programmes, including prime-time political debates.
- Online news portals and digital media outlets.
- Social media platforms, including Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and X.

Potential cases were identified through regular monitoring of selected media sources and public accounts. Each documented case was recorded in a monitoring database containing information on the source, language, platform, quotation, context, category, and severity level.

iWhenever possible, links, screenshots, or references were retained for verification purposes. Where content was later edited, deleted, or modified by the original author or publisher, the assessment was based on the version initially published and observed at the time of monitoring, with screenshots retained where available.

Cases were subsequently classified according to:

- Type of harmful discourse, including political, ethnic, religious, gender-based, anti-journalist, LGBTQI+-related, or other forms.
- Platform, including broadcast, online media, and social media.
- Language, Albanian or Serbian.
- Severity level.

The database was then used to identify trends, dominant narratives, and differences across media platforms and linguistic communities.

2.4 Severity Assessment

Each documented case was assessed using a five-level severity scale.

- Level 1: Problematic or offensive language, including insults, ridicule, and stereotyping.
- Level 2: Hostile or degrading discourse involving stigmatization or delegitimization.
- Level 3: Demonizing or dehumanizing narratives portraying individuals or groups as dangerous or threatening.
- Level 4: Incitement to hostility, discrimination, or exclusion.
- Level 5: Incitement to violence.

Source: Adapted from Babak Bahador's hate speech intensity framework and other international hate speech monitoring approaches.

Severity assessments considered not only the content itself but also contextual factors such as the status of the speaker, audience reach, communication platform, and broader social or political circumstances.

2.5 Limitations

The findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations. The monitoring focused on selected media outlets and publicly available content and therefore cannot capture all harmful discourse circulating within Kosovo's information environment. Social media visibility is influenced by platform algorithms, and some content may have been removed or modified after publication.

In addition, while classification followed predefined criteria, the assessment of harmful discourse inevitably involves a degree of professional judgment. The monitoring also focused primarily on major news programmes, Prime Time television debates, online news portals, and publicly accessible social media content. As a result, harmful discourse appearing in other media formats, including daytime talk shows, entertainment programmes, local broadcasts, or private online groups, may not be fully reflected in the findings.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides a reliable basis for identifying major trends and patterns of hate speech and harmful discourse in Kosovo's media environment.

3. Overview of the Monitored Cases

3.1 Overall Volume of Recorded Cases

Between March and May 2026, the monitoring documented a total of 138 cases of hate speech and harmful discourse across traditional media, online news portals, and social media platforms. The monthly distribution remained relatively stable throughout the monitoring period, indicating a sustained presence of harmful discourse within Kosovo's media environment.

Table 1. Number of Recorded Cases by Month

Indicator	March 2026	April 2026	May 2026	Total
Number of Cases	49	47	42	138

While the number of cases declined slightly in May, harmful discourse remained consistently present throughout the monitoring period.

3.2 Summary of Monitored Cases

The monitoring identified harmful discourse across all media categories, languages, and severity levels. Online news portals accounted for the largest share of documented cases, followed by social media platforms and broadcast media. Most cases originated from Albanian-language media, while Serbian-language media accounted for nearly one-quarter of all documented incidents.

Political and ideological hostility was by far the most prevalent category of harmful discourse, representing nearly three-quarters of all cases. The severity assessment further showed that most incidents involved offensive, hostile, or delegitimizing communication, although a smaller number involved more serious forms of demonization, discrimination, or incitement.

Table 2. Summary of Monitored Cases

Indicator	Result
Media Platform	Online News Portals (57), Social Media (44), Broadcast Media (37)
Language	Albanian (107), Serbian (31)
Most Common Type	Political/Ideological (99)
Other Types	Ethnic/Intergroup (10), Anti-Journalist (10), Other (7), Stereotyping (3), Religious (2), Gender-Based (2)
Severity Levels	Level 1 (64), Level 2 (40), Level 3 (28), Level 4 (4), Level 5 (2)

3.3 Key Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis reveals three key findings. First, harmful discourse during the monitoring period was driven primarily by political and ideological hostility, which accounted for nearly three-quarters of all documented cases. Second, online news portals and social media platforms served as the principal channels through which harmful narratives were disseminated and amplified. Third, although ethnic, religious, gender-based, and anti-journalist forms of harmful discourse appeared less frequently, they remained important areas of concern due to their potential impact on media freedom, social cohesion, and vulnerable groups.

Overall, the findings suggest that harmful discourse in Kosovo is shaped more by political polarization and hostile public debate than by traditional forms of identity-based hate speech. At the same time, the continued presence of higher-severity cases demonstrates the need for ongoing monitoring and efforts to promote responsible public communication.

4. Main Trends and Patterns

4.1 Political and Ideological Hate Speech and Delegitimization Narratives

Political and ideological hostility was the dominant form of harmful discourse identified during the monitoring period, accounting for 99 of the 138 documented cases (71.7%). The findings indicate that harmful discourse in Kosovo's media environment was driven primarily by political polarization and increasingly confrontational public debate. A significant proportion of these cases involved political actors, public officials, party representatives, and commentators directing hostile rhetoric against political opponents, often through media appearances, public statements, and social media platforms.

A recurring pattern involved the delegitimization of political opponents through accusations of betrayal, corruption, foreign influence, or disloyalty. Rather than focusing on policy differences, political actors and commentators frequently portrayed opponents as enemies of national interests or as actors working against the state. Examples included statements such as: "If Kurti does not deny it, this amounts to more than national treason" ("Nese Kurti nuk e demanton, kjo perben me shume se tradhti kombetare") and "This is how Vjosa joined the table of betrayal... If this were Turkey, she would be executed by firing squad." ("Ja si iu bashkua Vjosa tavolines se tradhtise... po te ishte ne Turqi do te pushkatohej.")

Another common narrative involved associating political opponents with Serbia or Serbian interests. Statements such as "You offspring of Serbia..." ("Ju pjella te Serbise...") and references to alleged UDB connections were used to undermine the legitimacy and patriotism of political actors by invoking historical and national sensitivities.

The monitoring also documented cases of dehumanizing and threatening rhetoric. Examples included descriptions such as "political animal" ("kafshe politike") and "Oh, you dogs..." ("Eh more qena..."), while one of the most severe statements recorded was: "A martyr's son should have come out and smashed his head in." ("U dashte djali i deshmorit me dale me ja ba atij kryt llom.")

Conspiracy narratives frequently accompanied political attacks. Political developments were portrayed as the result of hidden plans, manipulation, or foreign influence rather than ordinary democratic processes. Statements referring to election "schemes" and organized plans contributed to distrust and reinforced political polarization.

Overall, political harmful discourse was characterized by delegitimization, conspiracy framing, and personal attacks that often replaced substantive policy debate. The findings further suggest that political actors themselves were among the principal drivers of such rhetoric, contributing to the normalization of hostile and polarizing communication in the public sphere.

Case Example 1: Political Opponent Portrayed as a National Traitor

Category	Political and Ideological Harmful Discourse
Date	19 May 2026
Platform	Facebook (original publication), subsequently republished by Sinjali and other online news portals
Speaker	Citizen (video posted on personal Facebook profile)
Target	Daut Haradinaj, opposition politician
Statement	"Na paska folur Dauti, Daut Radoiqic. Une desha t'i them nja dy fjale Dautit. O Daut, populli te njeh mire..."

Why it matters

The statement deliberately replaces the surname of politician Daut Haradinaj with "Radoiqic", associating him with Milan Radoicic, the Serbian politician and businessman linked to the 2023 Banjska attack. By portraying a political opponent as aligned with a figure hostile to Kosovo's interests, the statement seeks to delegitimize and stigmatize the target through accusations of disloyalty and betrayal. The reference to the Kanun further introduces an element of implied threat, invoking traditional concepts of punishment associated with betrayal. The case also illustrates how inflammatory content originating on social media can gain wider visibility when republished by online news portals, extending its reach beyond the original audience.

4.2 Ethnic Narratives and Intergroup Hostility

The monitoring identified 10 cases of ethnic and intergroup hostility, primarily within Serbian-language media. Unlike political hostility, which targeted individuals, these narratives focused on communities and collective identities.

A recurring theme was the portrayal of Kosovo institutions as acting against the Serbian community. Statements referring to "terror against Serbs" ("teror nad Srbima"), "persecution of the Serbian people in Kosovo" ("progon srpskog naroda sa Kosova"), and "institutional violence against Serbs" ("institucionalno nasilje nad Srbima") framed political and institutional developments as forms of collective persecution.

Several cases relied on fear-based narratives suggesting existential threats to the Serbian community. Examples included references to "the eradication of Serbs from Kosovo" ("istrebljenje Srba sa Kosova") and "a final reckoning with the Serbian people" ("konacni obracun sa srpskim narodom"). While explicit ethnic insults were relatively rare, repeated narratives of victimization, insecurity, and collective threat contributed to mistrust and reinforced interethnic divisions.

The findings suggest that ethnic hostility was expressed less through direct hate speech and more through narratives of persecution, insecurity, and community threat. Although less frequent than political hostility, such narratives remain relevant because of their potential impact on social cohesion and interethnic relations.

Case Example 2: Institutional Actions Framed as Collective Persecution

Category	Ethnic Narratives and Collective Victimization
Date	25 May 2026
Platform	Kosovo Online (online news portal)
Speaker	Igor Simic, Srpska Lista
Target	Kosovo institutions
Statement	"Serbs are suffering from organized institutional terror." ("Srbi trpe organizovani institucionalni teror.") / "The aim is to intimidate Serbs ahead of the elections." ("Cilj je zastrasivanje Srba pred izbore.")

Why it matters

The statements frame the arrest of Serbian officials and actions by Kosovo institutions not as individual legal or administrative measures, but as part of a broader campaign directed against the Serbian community as a whole. By describing institutional actions as "organized institutional terror" and suggesting that their purpose is to intimidate Serbs before elections, the rhetoric reinforces perceptions of collective victimization and ethnic insecurity. This case illustrates a recurring pattern identified in Serbian-language media whereby political and legal developments are interpreted through narratives of persecution, discrimination, and community threat rather than through ordinary political or institutional processes.

4.3 Anti-Journalist Rhetoric and Pressure on Media

The monitoring documented 10 cases of anti-journalist rhetoric and harmful discourse directed at media professionals. Although representing a relatively small share of the overall database, these cases are significant because of their implications for media freedom and public trust in journalism.

A recurring pattern involved portraying journalists not as independent observers, but as politically affiliated actors, lobbyists, advocates, or individuals serving hidden interests. Rather than responding to the substance of journalistic reporting, several statements questioned the integrity, motives, and independence of journalists. In some cases, journalists were described as “mercenaries,” accused of promoting particular narratives in exchange for financial benefits, or alleged to be linked to criminal, political, or foreign networks.

Examples included statements by one political figure who alleged that certain media actors were driven by hidden agendas and financial interests. While he did not identify specific journalists or media outlets by name, he referred to some media actors as “mercenaries” and stated: “Even mercenaries should declare their assets” ("Mercenarët duhet të deklarojnë pasurinë"). He further claimed that some individuals “very quickly spread falsehoods simply because their bank accounts increase through sponsors” ("Shumë shpejt japin një shpifje veç pse ju rritet llogaria bankare prej sponsorizuesve") and that “they never speak without money” ("Ata pa pare s’flasin kurrë"). During the same discussion, he suggested that some media actors were closely connected to criminal and political interests, alleging that they “eat and drink together with super-criminals in order to carry out these campaigns” ("kanë pi e kanë hangër bashkë me super-kriminelët për me bo këto fushata").

Although these remarks were presented as general criticism of parts of the media rather than accusations directed at named journalists, they portrayed media actors as financially motivated and linked to hidden interests rather than acting independently. At the same time, he stated that he supported freedom of expression and was not advocating the closure of media outlets.

The monitoring also documented allegations that journalists were linked to foreign interests or receiving external funding. In one case, a journalist alleged that individuals working as experts and journalists had been paid by Serbia and referred to a case involving money allegedly originating from the Serbian intelligence agency (BIA). Such claims, when presented without supporting evidence, can contribute to distrust toward journalists and media institutions.

A particularly serious case involved the online targeting of a female journalist through the publication of personal information and sexually explicit messages. This case illustrates how anti-journalist hostility can intersect with gender-based harassment and online abuse.

Most anti-journalist cases involved delegitimization, stigmatization, and reputational attacks rather than direct threats. Nevertheless, repeated efforts to portray journalists as politically compromised, financially motivated, or acting on behalf of hidden interests risk undermining public trust in independent journalism, encouraging self-censorship, and weakening the media’s watchdog role in a democratic society.

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Case Example 3: Allegations of Foreign Funding and Influence in Journalism

Category	Anti-Journalist Rhetoric and Delegitimization
Date	20 March 2026
Platform	Kallxo Përnime (Prime Time Television Debate)
Speaker	Journalist
Target	Journalists and media commentators
Statement	During a televised debate, a journalist referred to an ongoing criminal investigation at the Special Prosecutor's Office of Kosovo and stated that "there was an operation in North Mitrovica where bags of money from BIA structures were seized after being handed over to an Albanian agent, who was then supposed to pass them on to a journalist" ("Kemi operacion ku paret me çanta të strukturave të BIA-së janë zënë në Veri të Mitrovicës duke iu dorëzuar agjentit shqiptar, i cili pastaj ka pas me i qu tek një gazetar").

Why it matters

The remarks were widely discussed and generated significant reactions among journalists, media representatives, and political actors. The phrase "bags of money" subsequently appeared in several public debates and was used to support broader narratives suggesting that certain media actors were influenced by Serbian interests. Although the speaker later said that his remarks had been misunderstood, the case illustrates how allegations linking journalists to foreign influence operations can quickly become part of wider political and media discourse, potentially affecting public trust in journalism and media independence.

4.4 Gender-Based, Religious and Identity-Based Harmful Speech

The monitoring documented a limited but noteworthy number of cases involving gender-based, religious, and identity-related harmful discourse. While these cases represented a relatively small proportion of the overall database, they reveal how personal characteristics, gender stereotypes, religious affiliation, and identity markers can be used to discredit, mock, or stigmatize individuals in public debate.

Several cases targeted women in public life through gendered language and personalized attacks. Rather than focusing on political positions or professional performance, female politicians were subjected to comments questioning their competence, identity, family background, or social role. In one case, Minister Donika Gërvalla was targeted through references to her family and father, including the statement: “I would very much like her (Donika Gërvalla) to undergo a DNA test” ("Shumë kisha pasë qef që kjo (Donika Gërvalla) me e bo ADN-në"). The statement shifted the discussion away from political issues and toward personal identity and family lineage. In another case, former President Vjosa Osmani was mockingly referred to as a “hairdresser” ("frizerka"), a term used to diminish her political standing through gendered stereotyping. The monitoring also documented online attacks directed at politician Vlora Çitaku, including sexist and offensive comments circulated on social media.

The monitoring further identified examples of derogatory language directed at minority communities and individuals. One politician referred to a former government representative of a non-majority community as a “coloured MP” ("deputeti me ngjyrë"), a phrase that risks reinforcing stereotypes and prejudice toward Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities.

Religious identity was less frequently targeted but was not entirely absent from the monitoring period. One notable example involved a discussion about nuclear weapons in Muslim-majority countries, during which a guest responded that such countries should have “at most camels” ("maksimum deve"). Although framed as a political comment, the statement relied on a derogatory stereotype that portrayed Muslim societies as dangerous and inferior.

Overall, these cases demonstrate how harmful discourse can extend beyond political rivalry and target individuals or groups based on gender, ethnicity, religion, or personal identity. While less common than political hostility, such rhetoric contributes to stigmatization, exclusion, and the normalization of discriminatory attitudes in public debate.

Case Example 4: Derogatory Reference to a Representative of a Minority Community

Category	Stereotyping and Discriminatory Language
Date	29 April 2026
Platform	Pressing (T7)
Speaker	Bekë Berisha, Member of Parliament
Target	Elbert Krasniqi, Minister and representative of non-majority communities
Statement	During a televised debate, the speaker referred to the politician as a “deputeti me ngjyrë” (“coloured MP”).

Why it matters

The statement illustrates how references to ethnic or community identity can be used in a derogatory manner to diminish or stigmatize public figures. In the Kosovo context, where Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities continue to face discrimination and social exclusion, the use of such language risks reinforcing stereotypes and reducing individuals to their perceived ethnic background rather than their public role or political positions. Although the statement does not constitute direct hate speech, it reflects a form of harmful discourse that may contribute to prejudice and exclusion toward minority communities.

4.5 Disinformation, Conspiracy Narratives, and Digital Amplification

The monitoring found a close relationship between harmful discourse, conspiracy narratives, and digital amplification. Although not all documented cases constituted disinformation, many involved unverified allegations, claims of hidden agendas, or suggestions that political developments were driven by secret actors and coordinated schemes rather than ordinary democratic processes.

A recurring pattern involved portraying political events and institutional decisions as the result of concealed plans or external influence. For example, a former president warned that "dangerous people with dangerous intentions" (*"Njerëz të rrezikshëm me qëllime të rrezikshme"*) were being brought into positions of power by "irresponsible individuals" (*"Këtu e sollën vendin njerëz të papërgjegjshëm"*). Similarly, the caretaker Prime Minister suggested that political developments that led to the snap elections were driven by hidden plans, stating that "time will show what plans they had" (*"Koha do të tregojë çfarë ka qenë ky lloj plani"*) and, in another instance that "time will show what kind of scheme..." (*"Koha do të tregojë çfarë ka qenë kjo skemë..."*).

The monitoring also identified repeated allegations that political actors, journalists, diplomats, or institutions were acting on behalf of foreign governments or hidden networks. Such claims were often presented without supporting evidence and were primarily used to question the legitimacy, motives, or independence of opponents.

Digital amplification played a central role in extending the reach of these narratives. In many cases, controversial statements first appeared in television debates, interviews, press conferences, or social media posts before being reproduced by online news portals and further disseminated through Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and X. During this process, context was often reduced while the most provocative elements of a statement received greater visibility.

The monitoring further documented cases involving manipulated visual content. One example involved a digitally altered image of Members of Parliament Besnik Tahiri and Duda Balje that circulated widely on social media. Another involved an anonymous online campaign using AI-generated images and false allegations targeting former President Vjosa Osmani. These cases demonstrate how digital technologies can be used to spread misleading content and damage the reputation of public figures.

Overall, the findings suggest that conspiracy narratives, manipulated content, and digital amplification frequently reinforce one another. Unverified claims contribute to distrust and polarization, while online platforms increase the visibility and reach of harmful narratives, making them more influential in shaping public perceptions.

Case Example 5: Manipulated Image Used to Discredit Political Opponents

Category	Disinformation and Digital Manipulation
Date	15 May 2026
Platform	Facebook and other social media platforms (original circulation); discussed on Rubikon (Klan Kosova)
Target	Besnik Tahiri and Duda Balje, Members of Parliament
Statement	During a television appearance, Besnik Tahiri explained that a widely circulated image depicting him and MP Duda Balje had been digitally manipulated.

Why it matters

The original photograph was altered to create the false impression of inappropriate physical contact between two Members of Parliament. According to Tahiri, the manipulated image circulated widely on social media and was accepted as genuine by many citizens, some of whom confronted him directly about the incident. This case illustrates how digitally manipulated content can be used to embarrass, discredit, or damage the reputation of public figures. It also demonstrates the growing role of visual disinformation in political communication and the challenges audiences face in distinguishing authentic content from manipulated material.

Case Example 6: AI-Generated Content Used in a Smear Campaign Against a Political Figure

Category	Disinformation, AI Manipulation, and Gendered Harmful Speech
Date	14 May 2026
Platform	Facebook
Target	Vjosa Osmani, President of Kosovo
Description	An anonymous Facebook profile allegedly circulated AI-generated images portraying Vjosa Osmani in fabricated and compromising situations, accompanied by claims such as “Vjosa Osmani had a sexual affair with her bodyguard.” Other manipulated images depicted her in a bikini with EU envoy Miroslav Lajčák and in the company of Gulf sheikhs.

Why it matters

This case illustrates the growing use of artificial intelligence tools to create and disseminate deceptive political content. The campaign combined visual manipulation, false allegations, and gender-based humiliation to damage the reputation of a public figure. Beyond its impact on the individual targeted, the case demonstrates how AI-generated disinformation can be used to influence public perceptions during politically sensitive periods and highlights emerging challenges for media literacy, fact-checking, and electoral integrity.

04

Online news portals represent 30% of monitored cases. Both Albanian and Serbian-language portals were tracked, including Gazeta Express, Koha.net, Insajderi, Kosovo Online, and Serbian-language news sites.

Key Online Platforms

- Gazeta Express - News articles and opinion pieces
- Koha.net - Political commentary and analysis
- Insajderi - Investigative reporting
- Kosovo Online - Serbian-language news portal
- Kossev - Bilingual reporting on Kosovo affairs

Key Online News Findings

- Online portals frequently amplify political polarization through editorial framing.
- Serbian-language portals show higher rates of ethnic narrative framing.
- Comment sections and social sharing amplify the reach of problematic content.
- Severity levels tend to cluster at 2-3, with occasional level 4 cases.

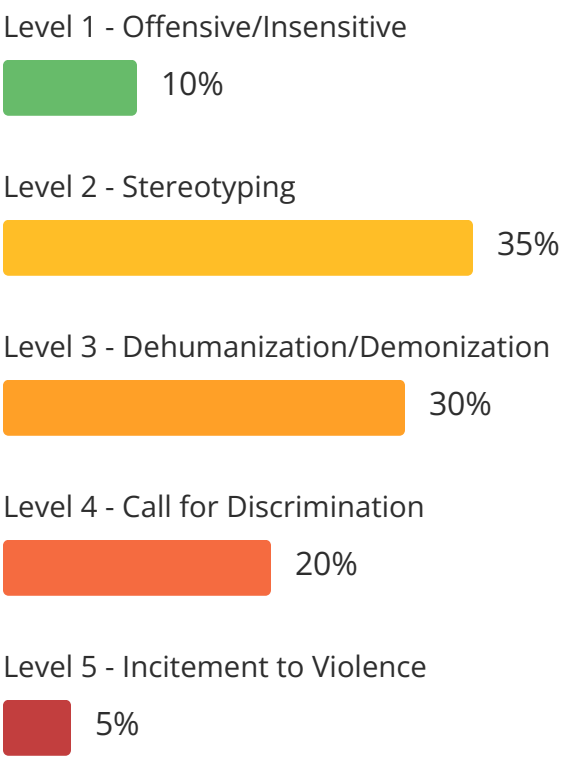
SEVERITY DISTRIBUTION

In addition to classifying cases according to type, platform, and language, the monitoring exercise assessed the severity of each documented case using a five-level scale adapted from the hate speech intensity framework developed by Babak Bahador and other international hate speech monitoring approaches. The severity assessment considered the nature of the language used, the target of the communication, the presence of stigmatizing or exclusionary narratives, and the extent to which the content encouraged hostility, discrimination, or violence.

The analysis demonstrates that harmful discourse in Kosovo's media environment exists on a spectrum. While most cases involved offensive or hostile language, a significant proportion contained stronger forms of delegitimization, demonization, and exclusionary rhetoric. Of the 138 documented cases, 64 were classified as Level 1, 40 as Level 2, and 28 as Level 3. Together, Levels 2 and 3 accounted for nearly half of all documented cases, indicating that problematic communication frequently extended beyond insults and involved more serious forms of stigmatization and demonization. Six cases were classified at Levels 4 and 5, representing the most severe incidents recorded during the monitoring period.

It is important to note that higher severity scores do not necessarily indicate that a statement meets the legal threshold of criminal hate speech under Article 141 of the Criminal Code of Kosovo. Rather, the scale was designed to capture varying degrees of harmful discourse, including stigmatization, delegitimization, demonization, and exclusionary rhetoric that may contribute to hostility and social polarization.

Severity Distribution by Level



SEVERITY TRENDS BY MONTH

Monthly trends reveal fluctuations in hate speech severity, with notable spikes during politically sensitive periods. March showed the highest concentration of level 3-4 cases, coinciding with political tensions.

MARCH 2026

Highest severity month. Political tensions drove level 3-4 cases. Broadcast media dominated with aggressive political discourse.

Share: 45%

Peak: Level 3-4

APRIL 2026

Moderate severity. Online news portals showed increased stereotyping. Social media amplified ethnic narratives.

Share: 35%

Peak: Level 2-3

MAY 2026

Slight decrease in severity. Gender-based narratives emerged more prominently. Social media remained the primary vector.

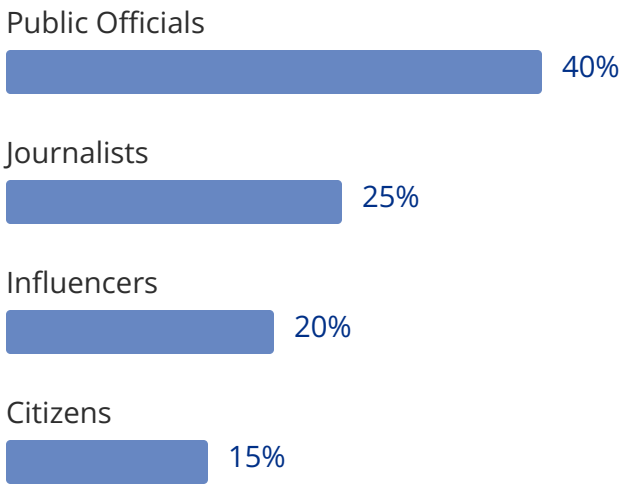
Share: 20%

Peak: Level 2-3

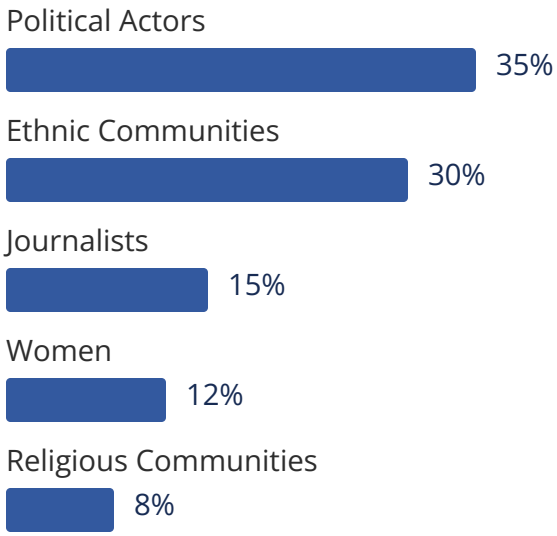
SPEAKER & TARGET ANALYSIS

Analysis of who produces hate speech and who is targeted reveals clear patterns. Public officials and journalists are the primary speakers, while political actors and ethnic communities bear the brunt of targeting.

Speaker Type Distribution



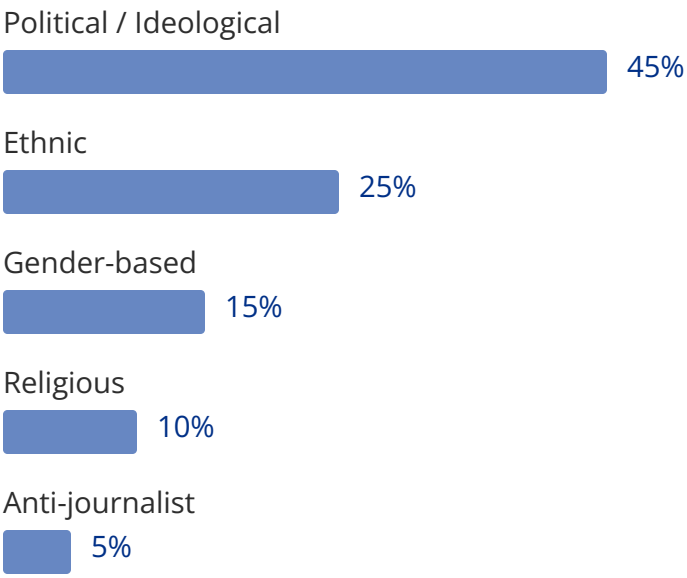
Target Group Distribution



NARRATIVE FRAMES & EMOTIONAL TONE

Narrative framing reveals how hate speech is contextualized. Political/ideological frames dominate, followed by ethnic and gender-based narratives. Emotional tone analysis shows aggressive and mocking tones as the primary vehicles for harmful content.

Narrative Frames



Emotional Tone

ALBANIAN LANGUAGE FINDINGS

Albanian-language media monitoring covered broadcast programs (RTV Dukagjini, T7, Klan Kosova, RTK), online portals (Gazeta Express, Nacionale, Koha.net), and social media platforms (Facebook, TikTok).

Key Patterns in Albanian Media

- Political demonization dominates broadcast debates, with public officials using aggressive rhetoric against opponents.
- Gender-based stereotyping is prevalent on social media, targeting women in politics and public life.
- Anti-journalist rhetoric appears frequently in political discourse, framing media as enemies of the state.
- Conspiracy narratives about foreign influence are used to delegitimize political opposition.
- Severity levels cluster at 2-3, with occasional spikes to level 4 during politically tense periods.

Notable Trend

Albanian-language broadcast media shows the highest concentration of politically motivated hate speech, particularly during live debate programs where public officials engage in direct demonization of opponents.

SERBIAN LANGUAGE FINDINGS

Serbian-language media monitoring covered online portals (Kosovo Online, Srpski Portal), broadcast segments, and social media platforms. Content primarily focused on ethnic narratives and political framing of Kosovo-Serbia relations.

Key Patterns in Serbian Media

- Ethnic framing dominates, portraying Kosovo institutions as threats to Serbian cultural and religious heritage.
- Fear-based emotional tone is more prevalent than in Albanian media, emphasizing existential threats.
- Conspiracy narratives about international actors are frequently used to frame Kosovo's independence as illegitimate.
- Disinformation about policy decisions is amplified through online portals and social media sharing.
- Severity levels tend toward 3-4, with stronger dehumanization language compared to Albanian media.

Notable Trend

Serbian-language online portals show the highest concentration of ethnic narratives and fear-based framing, often presenting Kosovo governance as an existential threat to Serbian communities and cultural identity.

PLATFORM ANALYSIS: TELEVISION

Television remains the most influential medium for political discourse in Kosovo. Broadcast debates on RTV Dukagjini, T7, Klan Kosova, and RTK are primary venues where hate speech is produced and amplified by public officials.

Platform
RTV Dukagjini
T7
Klan Kosova
RTK
Kanal 10

Key Insight

Live political debate programs are the highest-risk format for hate speech production. The unscripted nature of debates, combined with political pressure and audience expectations, creates conditions where public officials resort to demonization and aggressive rhetoric against opponents.

PLATFORM ANALYSIS: ONLINE PORTALS

Online news portals operate in both Albanian and Serbian languages, serving as key amplifiers of political narratives. They bridge traditional media and social platforms, often republishing broadcast content with additional editorial framing.

Portal
Gazeta Express
Nacionale
Koha.net
Kosovo Online
Paparaci

Key Insight

Online portals act as narrative amplifiers, often taking broadcast content and repackaging it with more extreme editorial framing. Serbian-language portals show higher severity scores on average, while Albanian portals focus more on political demonization.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

A side-by-side comparison of Albanian and Serbian language media reveals distinct patterns in hate speech production, severity levels, and narrative framing across the monitoring period.

Dimension	Albanian Media	Serbian Media
Dominant Frame	Political/Ideological	Ethnic/Religious
Avg. Severity	2.4	3.1
Primary Tone	Aggressive, Mocking	Fear-based, Angry
Main Targets	Political actors, Journalists	Ethnic communities, Institutions
Key Speakers	Public Officials	Journalists, Citizens
Peak Medium	Broadcast TV	Online Portals

Key Insight

Albanian media hate speech is primarily politically motivated and produced by public officials in broadcast settings. Serbian media hate speech is more ethnically framed, fear-based, and distributed through online portals with higher average severity scores.

HATE SPEECH TYPE BREAKDOWN

The dataset reveals five primary categories of hate speech, each with distinct characteristics, severity patterns, and media distribution.

Demonization

Framing opponents as existential threats or enemies. Most common in Albanian broadcast media during political debates. Average severity: 3.2

Stereotyping

Attributing negative traits to entire groups. Prevalent across both languages, particularly targeting ethnic communities. Average severity: 2.3

Dehumanization

Denying humanity or dignity to targets. Higher prevalence in Serbian-language portals. Average severity: 3.8

Conspiracy/Disinformation

Fabricating or distorting facts to delegitimize targets. Growing on social media with AI-generated content. Average severity: 2.5

Incitement

Direct or indirect calls for violence or discrimination. Rare but present in politically tense periods. Average severity: 4.5

7. Positive Examples and Good Practices

While the monitoring focused on identifying hate speech and harmful discourse, it also documented examples of responsible journalism and constructive public communication. These examples demonstrate that sensitive political, ethnic, and social issues can be discussed in a manner that informs the public while respecting professional and ethical standards.

Several television moderators and journalists actively challenged unsupported allegations, inflammatory claims, and conspiracy narratives during interviews and debate programmes. In a number of cases, moderators requested evidence to support serious accusations, sought clarification of controversial statements, or provided opportunities for alternative viewpoints to be presented. Such interventions helped prevent the normalization of unverified claims and contributed to more balanced public discussion.

The monitoring also identified examples of reporting that provided context and multiple perspectives on politically sensitive issues. Rather than amplifying provocative statements through sensational headlines, some media outlets contextualized controversial remarks, included responses from affected parties, and avoided reproducing inflammatory language without explanation. This approach reduced the risk of further amplifying harmful narratives while preserving the public's right to information.

Particularly noteworthy were examples of reporting on interethnic issues that avoided collective blame and focused on specific events, decisions, or actors rather than entire communities. Such reporting demonstrated that issues affecting relations between Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb communities can be covered professionally without reinforcing stereotypes or perceptions of collective responsibility.

The monitoring further identified instances in which journalists, commentators, and public figures promoted dialogue, tolerance, and democratic engagement. These interventions often encouraged audiences to focus on facts, public policy issues, and institutional solutions rather than personal attacks or divisive rhetoric.

The presence of these positive examples is important because it demonstrates that harmful discourse is not an inevitable feature of public debate. Responsible moderation, fact-based reporting, careful editorial judgment, and ethical communication can contribute to a more informed public sphere while protecting freedom of expression. Strengthening and promoting such practices should remain an important objective for media organizations, professional associations, regulators, self-regulatory bodies, and other stakeholders committed to improving the quality of public discourse in Kosovo.

8. Implications for Media Freedom and Social Cohesion

The findings suggest that the main challenge in Kosovo's media environment is not the widespread presence of explicit hate speech, but the normalization of hostile, delegitimizing, and polarizing forms of communication. Political opponents are frequently portrayed as traitors, enemies, or threats, shifting public debate away from policy issues and toward personal attacks and confrontation.

These trends have implications for democratic discourse and public trust. When political competition is framed as a struggle between legitimate and illegitimate actors, citizens may become increasingly distrustful of political institutions and democratic processes.

The monitoring also highlights concerns for media freedom. Repeated attacks on journalists, allegations of bias, and efforts to discredit media professionals contribute to an environment in which journalism is viewed through a partisan lens. While criticism of media performance is legitimate, persistent anti-journalist rhetoric risks undermining trust in independent journalism and discouraging critical reporting.

Although ethnic and religiously framed incidents represented a relatively small proportion of documented cases, narratives portraying communities as victims, threats, or adversaries continue to circulate. Such narratives may reinforce mistrust and complicate efforts to promote dialogue and social cohesion.

The findings further demonstrate the role of digital media in amplifying harmful communication. Content originating in political debates or public events is frequently reproduced by online news portals and social media platforms, extending its reach and visibility while often reducing context.

Overall, the monitoring indicates that strengthening democratic resilience requires promoting responsible political communication, protecting media freedom, encouraging ethical journalism, and improving resilience to divisive and manipulative narratives.

9. Conclusions

This monitoring exercise documented 138 cases of hate speech and harmful discourse across traditional media, online news portals, and social media platforms in Kosovo between March and May 2026. The findings indicate that harmful discourse remains a persistent feature of the media environment, driven primarily by political polarization, hostile rhetoric, and delegitimizing narratives rather than by widespread explicit hate speech.

Political and ideological hostility accounted for nearly three-quarters of all documented cases, making it the dominant form of harmful discourse during the monitoring period. The analysis also identified important differences between Albanian- and Serbian-language media, with the former characterized primarily by political confrontation and the latter more frequently incorporating ethnic narratives and collective victimization.

The monitoring further highlighted the close relationship between harmful discourse, conspiracy narratives, and digital amplification. Online news portals and social media platforms played a significant role in extending the reach and visibility of inflammatory content across audiences.

While most cases involved offensive, hostile, or stigmatizing communication, nearly one-quarter were classified at Level 3 or above, indicating the continued presence of demonizing, exclusionary, and, in some cases, potentially dangerous forms of rhetoric.

Overall, the findings suggest that harmful discourse in Kosovo is less a question of isolated incidents than a reflection of broader patterns of political polarization, declining standards of public debate, and the dynamics of the digital information environment. Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts to promote responsible communication, ethical journalism, media literacy, and constructive public dialogue.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this monitoring exercise suggest that addressing hate speech and harmful discourse requires a coordinated response involving media professionals, regulatory and self-regulatory bodies, political actors, civil society organizations, educational institutions, and international partners. While most documented cases did not reach the threshold of criminal hate speech, the prevalence of hostile, delegitimizing, and polarizing narratives highlights the need for preventive measures aimed at improving the quality of public discourse, strengthening media accountability, protecting media freedom, and promoting social cohesion. The following recommendations are intended to support these objectives and to address the key trends identified during the monitoring period.

For Media Organizations

Adopt and enforce editorial codes that explicitly address hate speech. Implement real-time monitoring during live broadcasts. Provide training for journalists on recognizing and countering hate speech narratives.

For Regulatory Bodies

Strengthen enforcement mechanisms for broadcast standards. Develop clear guidelines for online platforms operating in Kosovo. Establish rapid-response protocols for high-severity incidents.

For Political Actors

Commit to codes of conduct that prohibit demonization and dehumanization. Hold party members accountable for hate speech. Model constructive political discourse in public appearances.

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

For Civil Society

Expand media literacy programs targeting youth and vulnerable communities. Support independent fact-checking initiatives in both Albanian and Serbian languages. Develop early warning systems for escalating hate speech patterns.

For Platform Operators

Improve content moderation in Albanian and Serbian languages. Deploy AI-based detection tools for hate speech and disinformation. Establish transparent reporting mechanisms and enforce community standards consistently.

For International Community

Support capacity-building for local monitoring organizations. Fund cross-community dialogue initiatives. Include media accountability in EU integration benchmarks and progress reports.

Priority Actions

1. Establish a multi-stakeholder task force on media hate speech
2. Create a real-time monitoring dashboard for broadcast media
3. Develop bilingual media literacy curriculum for schools
4. Launch a public awareness campaign on disinformation
5. Strengthen legal frameworks for online hate speech

APPENDIX A: CLASSIFICATION GUIDE

Hate Speech Types

Demonization
Framing individuals or groups as existential threats, enemies of the state, or fundamentally evil.

Stereotyping
Attributing fixed negative characteristics to an entire group based on ethnicity, gender, or religion.

Dehumanization
Language that denies the humanity or dignity of targets, comparing them to animals or objects.

Conspiracy/Disinformation
Fabricating or distorting facts to delegitimize targets through false narratives.

Incitement
Direct or indirect calls for violence, discrimination, or exclusion against identified groups.

Narrative Frames

- Political/Ideological
- Ethnic
- Religious
- Anti-journalist
- Gender-based
- Institutional

Emotional Tones

- Aggressive
- Mocking
- Neutral
- Fear-based
- Angry
- Sarcastic

APPENDIX B: SEVERITY SCALE

Rabat + Bahador Severity Model

This report uses a combined severity classification model based on the Rabat Plan of Action threshold test and Bahador's escalation framework. Only levels 2-5 typically qualify as hate speech unless context elevates severity.

1

Offensive / Insensitive

Language that is rude, disrespectful, or insensitive but does not target a specific group. May include profanity or personal insults without group-based targeting.

2

Stereotyping

Attributing fixed negative characteristics to an entire group. Reinforces prejudice through generalization. Common in political discourse and media commentary.

3

Dehumanization / Demonization

Language that denies humanity or frames targets as existential threats. Compares groups to animals, diseases, or evil forces. Significantly escalates potential for harm.

4

Call for Discrimination / Exclusion

Direct or indirect calls to exclude, segregate, or discriminate against identified groups. May include calls for boycotts, removal from public life, or institutional exclusion.

5

Incitement to Violence

Direct or indirect calls for physical violence against identified groups or individuals. The most severe category, representing immediate danger to targeted communities.

APPENDIX C: PLATFORM REFERENCE

Platform			
RTV Dukagjini	Broadcast	Albanian	Debat Plus, Pressing, News
T7	Broadcast	Albanian	Pressing, Debat, News bulletins
Klan Kosova	Broadcast	Albanian	Zona e Debatit, News
Kanal 10	Broadcast	Albanian	Jeta ne Kosove, News
RTK	Broadcast	Albanian	Interaktiv, Jeta ne Kosove
Kosovo Online	Online News	Serbian	News articles, Analysis
Gazeta Express	Online News	Albanian	News, Opinion
Nacionale	Online News	Albanian	News, Investigative
Koha.net	Online News	Albanian	News, Analysis
Facebook	Social Media	Both	Political pages, Groups
TikTok	Social Media	Both	Political content, Influencers
YouTube	Social Media	Both	Debate recordings, Clips

APPENDIX D: DATA SUMMARY

Dataset Overview

Total Cases Monitored
150+

Monitoring Period
March - May 2026

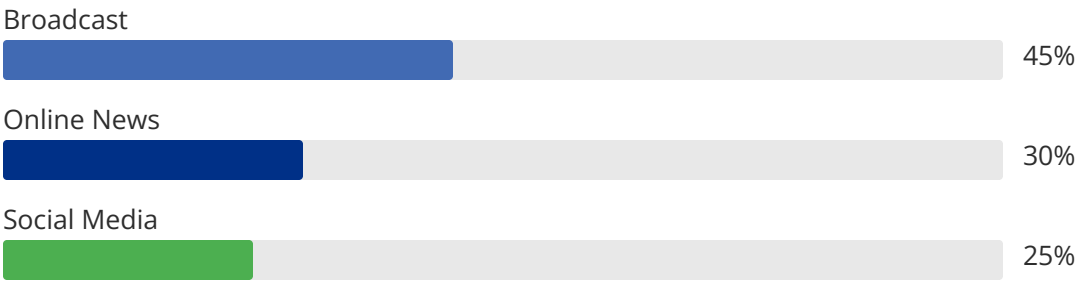
Languages Covered
2 (Albanian, Serbian)

Media Types
3 (Broadcast, Online, Social)

Platforms Monitored
12+

Severity Levels Used
1–5 (Rabat + Bahador)

Distribution by Medium Type



Asociacioni i Gazetarëve të Kosovës
Association of Journalists of Kosovo

Media Monitoring & Hate Speech Analysis Report

March - May 2026

Association of Journalists of Kosovo (AGK)

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