

## Youth's Role in Curbing Hate Speech and Reinforcing Moderation



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## **Youth Research Papers:**

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This is a summary of the original paper, which was written in Arabic.

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## Youth's Role in Curbing Hate Speech and Reinforcing Moderation

While the characterization of what is “hateful” is controversial, hate speech is normally defined “as any kind of communication in speech, writing or behavior, that denigrates a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race or other identity factor.”<sup>1</sup> Certainly, if we do not address such speech, violence and hate crimes are probable results.

Hate speech is a complex social and political phenomenon, and it has become easier to spread now in the age of social media. In Palestine, it has grown, in shocking forms, in conjunction with the political transformations since 2006 and the ensuing division that affected all aspects of social life. This affected the civil peace of all segments of society, especially the youth.

A study has shown that more than 71% of Palestinians have been exposed to hate speech and that 45.4% of it was related to political views while 7.9% of it was related to religious matters.<sup>2</sup>

Governments sometimes misuse the term “hate speech” to stifle criticism and to avoid being held accountable. Whenever there is a law prohibiting or restricting expression, it's important that it is really specific and clear. Otherwise, governments can abuse laws, whether they are on hate speech, national security, blasphemy, or anti-terrorism, to justify repressing legitimate dissent.<sup>3</sup>

Young people can play a key role in confronting hate speech in Palestine since they constitute 22% (one-fifth) of the population, according to the latest statistics.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Plan%20of%20Action%20Advanced%20Copy.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://7amleh.org/2021/09/29/hmlh-ytlq-bhtha-jdyda-hwl-khtab-alkrahyh-abr-mnsat-altwasl-alajtmaay-byn-alfstynnyyn-at>

<sup>3</sup> <https://challengehate.com/what-if-your-government-treats-criticism-as-hate-speech/>

The root cause of “hatred” is often ignorance and a lack of understanding. We need measures like better education, spaces for robust open debate, and a diverse and pluralistic media that better represent all voices in society, particularly those that are otherwise marginalized.<sup>4</sup>

What can be done to reduce hate speech in Palestinian society?

- 1. Building an anti-hate discourse:** Creating a space for open dialogue allows us to build an understanding of each other and realize the value of what we have in common and what sets us apart.
- 2. Forming pressure and advocacy campaigns:** All members of society, especially the youth themselves, should pressure politicians, officials, and other public figures to reject and oppose hate speech.
- 3. Cooperation between news websites and social media pages:** Formulating a joint charter that guarantees respect for differences and freedoms and rejects all forms of discrimination and hate speech.
- 4. Encouraging victims and witnesses to report hate speech crimes:** Directing victims to report and complain against hate speech crimes while ensuring the confidentiality of their information and procedures.
- 5. Forming human-right-defending groups** that pressure governments to enact better laws and policies; advocate for a diverse and pluralistic media; and encourage leaders, officials, and clerics to stand up against hate speech.
- 6. Thinking critically about hate speech:** The more you can consider and question the sources of information at hand, the accuracy of what is being said, and biases that may be motivating its presentation, the more effectively you can identify discriminatory narratives and call them out.<sup>5</sup>
- 7. Spreading awareness in universities:** Forming intellectual groupings and blocs that gather students of different partisan and political backgrounds to

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<sup>4</sup> <https://challengehate.com/thinking-critically-about-hate/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://challengehate.com/how-can-we-challenge-hate/>

work and think in one direction away from any kind of intolerance and hatred, then mainstreaming this approach among other students.