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Preventive measures and legal mechanisms to combat hate speech

according to Algerian Law No. 20/05 dated April 8, 2020.

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**Abstract:** 

Hate speech was, until recently, a phenomenon relatively foreign to Algerian society

due to its unity. However, the Algerian legislator took the initiative to enact Law No.

20/05 dated April 8, 2020, specifically addressing the prevention and combat of

discrimination and hate speech to protect society from this criminal behavior, especially

in response to urgent calls to address it by establishing more precise and clear standards.

This issue regained prominence at the beginning of 2020 due to the absence of strong

legal provisions. Law 20/05 subsequently emerged, along with a framework for

prevention and combat, as part of the 2020 Constitution, which included a range of

preventive measures, legal mechanisms, and means of combating hate speech.

**Keywords:** Hate speech, Discrimination, Peaceful coexistence, National Observatory for

the Prevention of Discrimination and Hate Speech.

**Introduction:** 

Hate speech crimes are considered offenses that threaten the fabric of societies,

undermining the principle of equality, especially in racially or religiously diverse

communities and other factors that contribute to division and discord.

Despite its unified population, Algeria swiftly enacted Law No. 20/05 dated April 8,

2020, specifically addressing the prevention and combat of discrimination and hate

speech. Its purpose is to protect society from this criminal behavior and combat it. Article

37 of the current Algerian Constitution reinforces this, stating that "all citizens are equal

before the law, and no one can claim any discrimination based on birth, race, gender,

opinion, or any other personal or social condition." Thus, prevention and combat against

these crimes were integrated into the framework of the constitution, which includes a

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range of preventive measures providing the most comprehensive framework to address the issue of hate speech.

Based on the foregoing, the importance of the topic titled "Preventive Measures and Legal Mechanisms to Combat Hate Speech According to Algerian Law No. 20/05 dated April 8, 2020" is evident. This Algerian law, which focuses on preventing and combatting discrimination and hate speech, raises the following questions: What is the concept of hate speech? and how can its danger to society be mitigated?

To address these questions, this article is divided into two sections:

Section 1: The Nature of Hate Speech

Section 2: Preventive and Deterrent Measures to Combat Hate Speech

**Chapter One: The Nature of Hate Speech Crimes** 

#### **The First Point:**

**Firstly, linguistically**, Ibn Faris states that the letters "" (kha), "" (ta), and "" (ba) have two fundamental meanings. One of them pertains to verbal communication between two individuals, where one addresses the other through speech<sup>1</sup>, and the segment of discourse directed towards a group of people can also be termed as "khitab" (speech). Furthermore, "khitab" can be traced back to the verbal root " (khatib), which means addressing someone through words. The term underwent a transition from its verbal form to its nominal<sup>2</sup> form, as exemplified in the Quranic verse: "So he said, 'Then throw me into the abyss<sup>3</sup>" Here, addressing denotes the revisitation of speech<sup>4</sup>.

"Hate" is derived from the verb (karaha), which has various forms including (kurh), (kirahah), and (kirahiyah). It is the opposite of love<sup>5</sup>. It is said, "I disliked the thing intensely," using (karaha) as the verb, and (kurh) is the noun form. It is also said, "Rather, dislike it," which means to strongly dislike something that is imposed or required<sup>6</sup>.

# Secondly, the definition of hate speech in terminology:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>- Ibn Faris Ahmad, "Measures of Language," Dar Al-Jeel, Beirut, Lebanon, 2008, p. 198.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>- Ahmed Mukhtar, "Dictionary of Modern Arabic Language," 1st Edition, Al-Alam Al-Kitab, Cairo, Egypt, 2008, p. 600.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>- Surah Sad, verse 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>- Ibn Sayyidah Al-Mursi, Al-Mukhassas, Volume 1, Dar Ihya Al-Turath Al-Arabi, Beirut, 1st Edition, 1996, page 217.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>- Ibn Manzur, Lisan Al-Arab, Volume 13, Dar Al-Ma'arif, Cairo, 2016, page 536.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>- Ibn Faris Ahmad, Maqayis Al-Lughah, Previous Reference, Volume 5, page 172.

It is "any discourse founded on verbal violence, aiming at moral killing of the other and excluding them through calls for killing, violence, insult, defamation, humiliation, racial discrimination, intellectual bias, and arrogance. Hate speech constitutes an important tool for provoking and directing emotions in a specific direction, leading to the creation of behavior and culture built on racism and discrimination against those targeted by the discourse. Hence, the danger of this speech lies in particular when there are media platforms conducive to this type<sup>1</sup>".

## The Second Point: The Concept of Hate Speech in Algerian Legislation:

# Firstly, the concept of hate speech in Algerian legislation:

the Algerian legislator defines hate speech in Article 2 of Law 20/05 as follows: "All forms of expression that disseminate, promote, or justify discrimination, as well as those that include contempt, insult, hostility, violence, or hatred directed towards an individual or a group of individuals based on gender, race, color, lineage, national origin, ethnicity, language, geographical affiliation, disability, or health status<sup>2</sup>".

This definition lacks precision and clarity. It is overly broad and could complicate matters, as it mentions several terms that require further explanation and clarification, such as "hostility," "hatred," and "contempt." The legislator in this definition seems to focus more on examples than on providing a concise and clear definition, potentially leading to the oversight of important issues related to this definition.

#### Secondly, the definition of hate speech in Algerian Penal Law:

The Algerian legislator criminalizes hate speech in the Penal<sup>3</sup> Law under Article 295(1), which is incitement to hatred against any individual or group of individuals based on their racial or ethnic affiliation or organizing, promoting, encouraging, or engaging in propaganda for such purposes.

It's worth noting that the same definition is literally quoted in Law 20/05, which relates to the prevention and combat of discrimination and hate speech, in its Article 1.

**In summary**, hate speech encompasses all forms of expression that disseminate, promote, or justify discrimination, as well as those that employ contempt, insult, hostility,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>- See Sky for Ibn International Monitoring of Hate Speech and Incitement in Arab Islam, Organization Publications, Sweden, April 2019, page 03.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> - Article 02 of Law No. 20/05 dated April 28, 2020, Official Gazette, Issue No. 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>- Law 14/01, issued on February 4, 2014, is an amendment and supplement to the Algerian Penal Code.

hatred, or violence directed towards an individual or a group of individuals based on gender, race, color, lineage, national origin, ethnicity, language, geographical affiliation, disability, or health status<sup>1</sup>.

It is also worth noting that this definition is the same as the one found in Law 14/01, which amends the Penal Code, without any changes. It is also directly taken from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. This highlights the importance of legislative rephrasing when incorporating such definitions into national law and not merely relying on the wording from international conventions<sup>2</sup>.

## Thirdly, the forms of hate speech:

Hate speech takes on several forms that vary depending on the intended meaning conveyed through this speech. These forms include the following<sup>3</sup>:

- 1- Discriminatory and racist speech based on religious, political, ideological, sexual, or racial affiliation, leading to the exclusion of certain groups and depriving them of enjoying human rights on an equal footing with others.
- 2- Incitement speech, which encompasses any speech that encourages negative actions or deeds that result in serious physical or moral harm.
- 3- Speech inciting hatred and advocating violence, which includes any language that encourages committing a crime or adopting any violent behavior involving hatred.
- 4- Speech containing insults, slurs, hurtful words, or offensive language that has detrimental effects on the targeted individuals, with words that include mockery or defamation, preventing those targeted from living with dignity and self-esteem.

# The Second Section: Preventive and Deterrent Measures to Counter Hate Speech Crimes According to Law 20/05 on Prevention of Discrimination and Hate Speech

In this section, we delve into the preventive measures aimed at mitigating hate speech crimes as introduced by Law 20/05, which focuses on preventing discrimination and hate

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>- Rizika Qarishi, Ilham Ben Khalifa. "The Concept of Discrimination Crimes and Hate Speech between National and International Law." Proceedings of the Fifteenth International Symposium on Discrimination Crimes and Hate Speech: Reality and Challenges. Faculty of Law and Political Science, University of Martyr Hamma Lakhdar, Ouargla, Algeria. November 29-30, 2021, page 348.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>- Hussein Sharouf. "Provisions of the Newly Established Crime of Discrimination in Algerian Penal Law." Al-Bahith Journal of Academic Studies, University of Batna 01, Issue 7, September 2015, page 119.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>- Wafi Hajja, Hate Speech Between Freedom of Expression and Criminalization: A Study in Light of International Law, an article published in the International Journal of Legal and Political Research, University of Hamma Lakhdar, El Oued, Algeria, Volume 04, Issue 01, March 2021, page 67 and beyond.

speech. This law was enacted in response to the proliferation of various forms of discrimination and hate speech within Algerian society, posing a threat to the security and stability of the community. Consequently, the state had to intervene by formulating a national strategy to ensure the safety and stability of individuals within society.

#### The first requirement: Preventive measures against hate speech.

**The first topic** in this section covers preventive measures against hate speech, starting with the national strategies outlined in Law 20/05<sup>1</sup> for countering hate speech.

1- Promotion of Public Life Ethics in Society: Article 05 of Law 20/05 states: "The state is responsible for establishing a national strategy to prevent discrimination and hate speech with the aim of promoting public ethics, spreading a culture of tolerance and dialogue, and rejecting violence from society".

This strategy includes what was stipulated in the 2000 constitutional amendment regarding the contribution of the supreme authority to achieve transparency and prevent and combat corruption, as per Article 205<sup>2</sup>, where its importance was acknowledged in promoting public life ethics and enhancing transparency and good governance. It also reinforced the determination of the people to keep it away from strife, extremism, and hate speech by solidifying its spiritual and cultural values based on dialogue, reconciliation, and brotherhood, while respecting the constitution and the laws of the republic<sup>3</sup>.

The ethics of society are at the core of promoting national unity and ensuring the prosperity of the country in various fields and domains that contribute to societal development. This includes realizing the values and societal principles and actively implementing them, so that the society becomes capable of participating in development programs guided by its ethics and values of tolerance and kindness<sup>4</sup>.

2- The development of educational programs related to hate speech prevention:

The article 08 of the law 20/05 stipulates that media outlets must ensure the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>- Zakaria Harfass, Prevention of Racial Discrimination and Hate Speech in the Interactive Urban Community Environment, Comparative Algerian Public Law Journal, University of Djilali Liabes, Sidi Bel Abbès, Algeria, Volume 7, Issue 01, Page 325.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>- See Article 205 of Presidential Decree No. 20/442, dated 30/12/2020, related to the issuance of the constitutional amendment approved on 01/11/2020, in the Official Gazette No. 82, dated 30/12/2020, page 43.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>- Page 05 of the 2020 Constitution preamble.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>- Zakaria Harfass, as previously referenced, page 329.

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discrimination of programs promoting a culture of prevention against all forms of discrimination and hate speech, as well as tolerance and human values. This is accomplished by having media institutions develop educational and training programs to raise awareness about the dangers of discrimination and hate speech, and to educate society about the importance of contributing to the fight against anything that could turn the societal environment into zones of conflict, crisis, and violence in all its forms. These programs target students in schools and universities, as well as training centers and all public and private institutions, with the aim of instilling a culture of tolerance among individuals.

3-Working on promoting a culture of human rights in society: The national policy for preventing hate speech aims to encourage members of society to respect international treaties and national legislation that safeguard human rights without infringing on the dignity of citizens. This is achieved by promoting a culture of tolerance, dialogue, and acceptance of others, which supports participatory democracy and fosters harmony among members of society to curb hate speech. Additionally, civil society is involved in the development and implementation of the national strategy for preventing hate speech<sup>1</sup>.

4- Encouraging the media to promote a culture of democracy in society: The media plays a fundamental role in raising awareness about the dangers of hate speech, ensuring the dissemination of a culture of prevention against all forms of this speech, promoting tolerance and human values, and working to spread them through various media outlets. Additionally, it works on deepening the values of dialogue and safeguarding human rights in society<sup>2</sup>.

Indeed, many media outlets prioritize sensationalism and the minutiae of events, often leading to a decline in professional standards, investigative journalism, and scrutiny<sup>3</sup>. Hate speech can be prevalent in various forms<sup>4</sup> within media, highlighting the importance of having objective and ethical media outlets to inform the public in a balanced manner about societal issues that may be controversial.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>- Refer to Article 7 of the aforementioned Law 20/05.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>- Wardah Jandalii Bint Mubarak, Combating Hate Speech in International Law and Algerian Legislation, Legal Consolidation and Preventive Measures, Arab Journal of Studies, Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, Saudi Arabia, Issue 37, 2021, page 118.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>- Moataz Al-Khatib, The Phenomenon of Hatred Towards Islam, Its Roots, and Solutions, Our Culture Magazine for Studies and Research, Issue Seventeen, Volume Five, 2008, page 70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>- Ridwan Boujemaa, Hate Speech in the Media and Mechanisms for Confrontation, Algerian Journal of Communication, Volume 19, Issue 02, page 05.

To avoid unnecessarily sensationalizing events or actions that can lead to undesirable consequences, maintaining high journalistic standards and ethics is crucial.

"And thus, the media bears the responsibility to rectify and address these ideas appropriately, in order to prevent the persistence of manifestations of hatred and to eliminate the causes of tension and agitation. This can only be achieved through the concerted efforts of scientific and research institutions to confront this phenomenon and mitigate its harmful effects<sup>1</sup>".

The second requirement deals with national-level bodies combating hate speech:

The mechanisms for preventing hate speech in Law 20/05.

Firstly: The National Observatory for the Prevention of Discrimination and Hate Speech

The National Observatory for the Prevention of Discrimination and Hate Speech, as established by Article 09 of Law 20/05, is a national body dedicated to combating discrimination and hate speech. It operates under the authority of the President of the Republic and enjoys legal personality as well as financial and administrative independence. This observatory consists of six national experts appointed by the President of the Republic, along with other members outlined in Article eleven of the same law. This institution serves as an executive body responsible for implementing the national strategy for preventing hate speech, as outlined in Article 05 of Law 20/05, in addition to certain measures detailed in Articles 06 and 07 of the same law. Moreover, this entity possesses other powers specified in Article 10 of the aforementioned law, which generally include the following:

- 1- Combining the elements of the national strategy for preventing discrimination and hate speech and contributing to its implementation by coordinating with relevant public authorities, various stakeholders in society, and civil society.
- 2- Early monitoring of acts of discrimination and hate speech and notifying relevant authorities.
- 3- Reporting to the competent judicial authorities any acts that come to their knowledge and that may constitute a crime as defined in this law.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>- Al-Ta'i Mustafa Hameed Al-Ta'i, Interpretive Theories of Violence and Hate Speech in the Media, Algerian Journal of Communication, Volume 19, Issue 02, 2020, page 49."

- 4- Providing opinions and recommendations on any matter related to hate speech.
- 5- Periodic evaluation of legal instruments and administrative procedures in the field of hate speech prevention and assessing their effectiveness.
- 6- Establishing standards and methods for hate speech prevention and enhancing national expertise in this field.
- 7- Developing awareness programs and coordinating efforts to raise awareness of the risks and effects of hate speech on society.
- 8- Collecting all data related to hate speech.
- 09- Conducting studies and research in the field of hate speech prevention.
- 10- Making any proposals aimed at simplifying and improving the national legal framework for hate speech prevention.
- 11- Enhancing cooperation and information exchange between various national and foreign institutions working in this field.

In addition, the National Observatory can assess the implementation of the national preventive strategy against hate speech and prepare an annual report to be submitted to the President of the Republic. This report is then published for the national public to review<sup>1</sup>.

Article 100 of the law outlines the extensive powers granted to the National Observatory. According to Article 5 of the same law, it is the state's responsibility to develop the national strategy for preventing discrimination and hate speech to foster public morality, promote a culture of tolerance and dialogue, and reject violence. Meanwhile, the National Observatory, in accordance with Articles 10 and 14 of the same law, is tasked with proposing and evaluating measures. Article 7 of the law also emphasizes the involvement of civil society and the private sector in the development of the strategy for preventing violence and hate speech<sup>2</sup>.

In the field of awareness and education, the National Observatory carries out this task in

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>- See Article 14 of Law 20/05 mentioned above.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>- azhar el abidi "Crimes of Discrimination and Hate Speech in Algerian Legislation: A Reading of Law 20/05 on the Prevention of Discrimination and Hate Speech and Their Suppression in Light of International Human Rights Agreements." This article was published in the International Journal of Legal and Political Research, University of El Oued, Algeria, Volume 4, Issue 1, 2020, on page 52.

collaboration with the various media institutions<sup>1</sup>. To ensure that the National Observatory fulfills its designated role effectively, the legislator has provided certain guarantees for its President and members, including independence, neutrality, integrity, and protection from threats, violence, and humiliation in accordance with the applicable legislation<sup>2</sup>.

# Secondly: The role of educational institutions and the mosque foundation in combating hate speech

Educational and educational institutions at all levels can be a fertile ground for immunizing society against hate speech and discrimination. This can be achieved by adopting educational and teaching programs that are primarily linked to the nation's identity and its rich history of bonds, cohesion, fraternity, good neighborliness, and peaceful coexistence, which are deeply rooted in society. Strengthening the components of national identity within the programs outlined in the field of education can play a crucial role in combating extremism in society in all its forms, whether it is sectarian, regional, religious, or otherwise.

In the same vein, mosques play a significant and prominent role in countering discrimination and hate speech. The pulpits in mosques have a unique influence directly affecting the minds of individuals in society. Therefore, it is essential to utilize this space to immunize society against this harmful foreign influence in all its forms and manifestations. One of the crucial aspects in this regard is establishing a mosque discourse with a reference to the nation's past, present, and future. This includes promoting a discourse of moderation and adopting the Maliki school of thought, which has contributed to spreading the rituals' unity among Muslims within the country over different time periods.

# The third requirement: Mechanisms for deterring hate speech

Based on Article 4 of Law 20/05, freedom of speech and expression cannot be used to justify hate speech. Therefore, the Algerian legislator has established deterrent penalties through the provisions of the aforementioned law, in addition to monitoring and protection measures for victims of hate speech.

The legislator, based on the fifth chapter of Law 20/05, has prescribed deterrent penalties

<sup>1-</sup> Paragraph 7 of Article 10 of Law 20/05

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>- The second paragraph of Article 13 of Law 20/05

for anyone proven to be involved in committing hate speech crimes. The punishment includes imprisonment for a period of six months to three years and a fine ranging from 60,000 Algerian dinars to 300,000 Algerian dinars for anyone who disseminates hate speech, organizes, incites, or engages in propagandistic activities for hate speech.

And with imprisonment from one year to three years, and a fine ranging from 100,000 Algerian dinars to 300,000 Algerian dinars<sup>1</sup>.

Additionally, hate speech is punishable by imprisonment for a period of two to five years and a fine ranging from 200,000 Algerian dinars to 500,000 Algerian dinars<sup>2</sup>:

- -If the victim is a child, or if the victim's condition due to their illness, disability, mental incapacity, or physical incapacity makes the crime easier to commit.
- -If the perpetrator of the act has legal or factual authority over the victim or exploits their position in committing the crime.
- -If the act is committed by a group of individuals, whether as primary actors or accomplices.
- -If the crime is committed using information and communication technologies.
- -He is also punished with imprisonment from three to seven years and a fine ranging from 300,000 DZD to 700,000 DZD if the incitement includes a call to violence<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, he is subject to imprisonment from two to five years and a fine ranging from 500,000 DZD to 1,000,000 DZD for anyone who sponsors, encourages, or funds, through any means, activities, associations, organizations, or groups that promote hatred<sup>4</sup>.

Given that websites have become an effective element in the spread of hate speech crimes, the legislator has established a penalty of imprisonment from five to ten years and a fine ranging from 5,000,000 DZD to 10,000,000 DZD for anyone who creates, manages, or supervises an electronic website dedicated to disseminating information to promote hate speech in society<sup>5</sup>.

#### **Conclusion:**

Law No. 20/05 related to the prevention of discrimination and hate speech is one of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>- The second paragraph of Article 30 of Law 20/05

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>- Article 31 of Law 20/05

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>- Article 32 of Law 20/05

<sup>4-</sup> Article 33 of Law 20/05

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>- Article 34 of Law 20/05

the most significant achievements that the authorities have worked to achieve in the face of the spread of this phenomenon. This is especially crucial as some social media platforms have become spaces for disseminating ideas that are detrimental to the foundations of national unity and societal cohesion. They spread hate speech, contempt, and vile epithets towards individuals or groups within society for regional, ethnic, religious, or personal reasons.

This study has yielded several results, including:

- 1- Despite Algeria's efforts in amending the Penal Code in 2014 and introducing Law No. 20/05 in 2020 to combat discrimination and hate speech, it still lags behind many countries that have established comprehensive systems to combat hate speech crimes, both in terms of laws and specialized agencies, not to mention studies and budgets dedicated to combating this criminal growth.
- 2- Hate speech crimes undermine the security and safety of society both internally and externally.
- 3- Freedom of expression is guaranteed under domestic laws and international agreements, but it is unreasonable for this right to be used as a pretext to disseminate hate speech under the guise of freedom of opinion and belief.
- 4- The Algerian legislator's reason for criminalizing hate speech crimes is rooted in Algeria's commitment to international law, which obliges states to implement their contractual obligations. Thus, hate speech is prohibited under the constitution and criminalized under penal law.

#### \* The proposals are as follows:

- 1- The necessity of instilling religious and moral values among the younger generations to prevent the observed and increasing decline in schools, universities, and various relevant institutions.
- 2- Taking all appropriate measures to distance oneself from slogans that affect and influence the essence of society and its foundations.
- 3- Promoting a culture of tolerance and love, rejecting division, and avoiding all forms of extremism, excommunication, hate speech, insults, and violence. It is essential to strengthen family bonds, support brotherhood among the nation's citizens, and enhance national unity.

- 4- The necessity of involving the Supreme Islamic Council in Algeria by appointing a representative within the composition of the National Observatory for the Prevention of Discrimination and Hate Speech. This aims to remind of Islamic values that have been pioneers in combating hate speech, given that many hate speech crimes are committed in the name of religion.
- 5- Focusing on the role of the media in spreading a spirit of tolerance, harmony, and peaceful coexistence among members of society.

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