

An Atmosphere of Hate Case Study: OpIndia

HOW TO WRITE AN
 OP INDIA
ARTICLE

STEP 1: RESEARCH



THOROUGHLY RESEARCH THE TOPIC OR
INCIDENT YOU ARE WRITING ABOUT

STEP 2: FACT CHECKING



MAKE SURE YOU VERIFY THE
AUTHENTICITY OF ALL THE FACTS

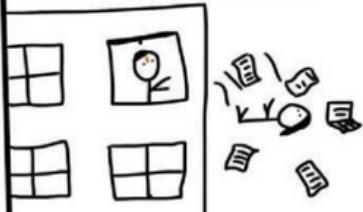
STEP 3: SOURCES



BACKUP

CITE ALL YOUR SOURCES FOR
CREDIBILITY

STEP 4: THROW IT ALL OUT THE WINDOW



SWIFTLY EJECT THE PERSON AND
THEIR WORK OUT THE NEAREST WINDOW

STEP 5: VOMIT SOME FAKE INFORMATION



THE MORE ISLAMOPHOBIC, THE
BETTER

STEP 6: ADD A QUOTE FROM BJP



ОИИИИ ЧЕЕЕАААИИИИИ

STEP 7: PUBLISH



SUCCESS!

STEP 8: FORWARD TO BJP IT CELL



YOUR WAD OF CASH IS ON ITS
WAY FROM THE RSS HEADQUARTER

@sanitarypanels

Stichting the London Story is a diaspora-led think tank based in the Netherlands. We are committed to defending human rights of minorities and migrants within and outside of India.

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Summary

There is a rising concern that India is at the verge of a genocide. There is a growing concern that online hate speech in India through social and news media is influencing on-ground violence. While the rise of hate speech in India needs to be contextualised in terms of fear, violence, time and space in this report, we investigate on a temporal scale the role of far-right media house OplIndia in promoting a divisive anti-muslim propaganda in India using natural language processing.

OplIndia as a far-right media house has in recent times not only promoted a highly Islamophobic narrative in India it has also went on to rationalise the anti-muslim violence as a religious war of Hindus. To better understand OplIndia's role in promoting and rationalising violence, we conducted a sentiment analysis of 2296 articles written by OplIndia on Muslims from 2014 to 2019. Our analysis shows three distinctive periods of narrative building by OplIndia. From 2014 to 2016, OplIndia's discussion on Muslims were largely banal and focused on geopolitical relations between India and Pakistan; questioning regressive practices such as Triple Talaq; and discussing Hindu-Muslim co-existence in India. OplIndia's opinion on Hindu-Muslim co-existence mirrored the sentiments expressed by the Hindu-nationalist party BJP. From 2017 to 2018, OplIndia increasingly fed a narrative of 'Hindus being in danger', allegedly because of Islamic terrorism and Muslim 'over-procreation'. We define this period as creating the propaganda of 'Hinduphobia'. Finally, from 2019 onwards, there was a measurable shift in both the frequency of articles written on Indian Muslims and the use of toxic terminologies to demonise Indian Muslims. We observed a period of acute polarisation and othering of Indian Muslims. The period of late 2018 and early 2019 also coincided with rise of ultra-nationalist right-wing groups on Facebook. These groups regularly use content from OplIndia, Swaraj Mag and The Frustrated Indian to drive anti-Muslim narrative while furthering a 'Hindu Rashtra' (Hindu nation) agenda and also expanding the reader base of the far-right media in India. Our observation show that increasingly the articles of OplIndia are written to (a) dox dissenters or (b) rationalise violence against them.

Campaign

Following and based on this analysis dedicated social media campaign was launched by Sthicting London Story in partnership with Stop Funding Hate, a civil society organisation fighting disinformation and hate-speech online. The campaign led to over 31 advertisers publicly pulling their advertisers from OplIndia within one week. This was followed by a moratorium imposed by Google Ad Sense in automatic ad placement on OplIndia during 2020. The campaign shows the power of active-citizenship and the necessity for questioning the automated algorithm-led monetisation of news media.

Case Study: OpIndia

OpIndia is a news outlet which was started in 2014 by Rahul Raj as a blog to report critical right-of-centre news analyses. In 2016, the outlet was transferred to Kovai Media private Ltd., which also currently owns and operates centre-right online magazine Swaraj Mag. OpIndia was incorporated under Adhyaasi media in 2018.

In our study, we analyse the nature of content published by OpIndia further. Elsewhere, it is argued that the establishment of right-wing news outlets such as OpIndia has served to discredit professional journalism[1]. The expression of anti-media sentiments by right-wing forces – as a constitutive element of populism – through partisan ideological platforms such as OpIndia has emerged as a significant feature of the Indian media landscape. These attacks on the mainstream media are generally articulated through a discursive repertoire aimed at undermining the claims to accuracy, neutrality, and ethics that underpin professional journalism's occupational identity and legitimacy. For example, the strategy of "highlighting mainstream media mistakes" is used by right-wing outlets such as OpIndia to engender skepticism and mistrust in the professional practices of mainstream news sources[2].

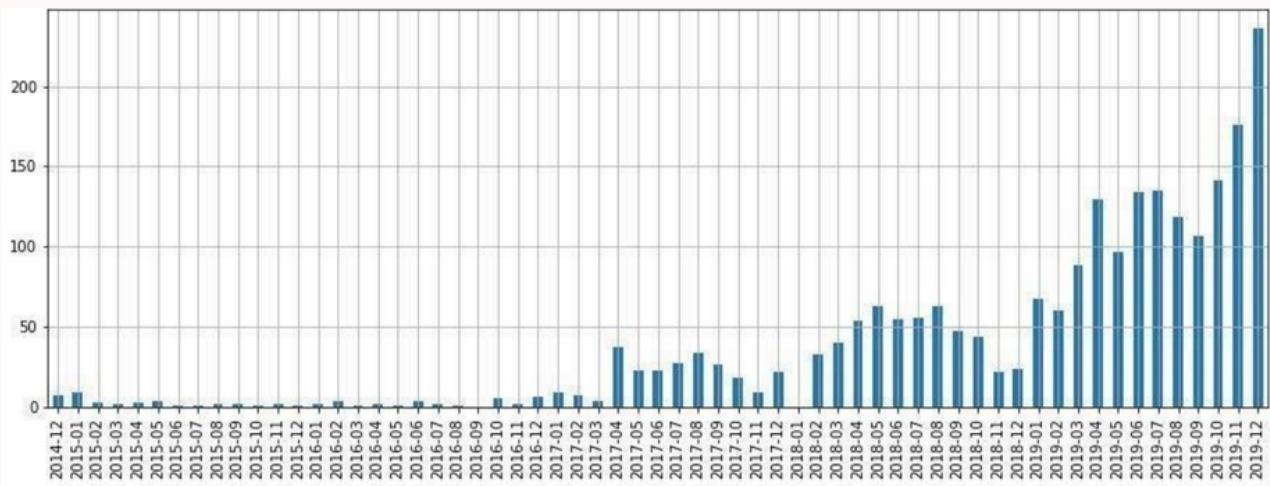
OpIndia regularly engages in "interest-based" criticism that seeks to challenge the credibility of established news outlets [3]. Similarly, by "naming and shaming journalists," as well as "publicising critiques of journalism by prominent individuals," right-wing outlets seek to challenge public perceptions of journalists as ethical and acting in the public interest, thereby affecting their ability to position themselves as actors who have the right to "create legitimate discursive knowledge for others"[4].

Methodology

We manually collected articles that featured the keyword 'Muslim'. We analysed these articles line by line using the natural language processing tool kit developed at Stanford University[5]. We coded the lines as positive, negative or neutral depending on their sentiment. Within each sentiment, we then created a word cloud using Python's word-cloud library[6]. We included the 200 most frequently used words, and removed noise in terms of random consonants and non-action verbs. We grouped and analysed the articles into four time frames: 2014-2016 ('incubation period'), 2017 ('regrouping period'), 2018 ('rise of othering period') and 2019 ('Hindophobia period').

Results and Explanation

There is an observable rise in the frequency of articles written on Muslims from 2014 to the end of 2019. While we have yet to analyze the data for 2020, our keyword search has shown that the number of articles covering Muslims rose exponentially from approximately 1800 articles by 2019, to more than 2000 articles within the first six months of 2020 alone.



The line-by-line sentiment analysis of OplIndia articles reveals a consistent rise in negative sentiment and in noise (neutral sentiment).

Year/Sentiment	Negative	Positive	Neutral
2014-2016	287	174	1995
2017	764	404	5792
2018	1176	752	10930
2019	4982	2630	39515

Incubation Period: 2014 -2016

The 2014-2016 period is an ‘incubation period’. OplIndia’s articles largely cover issues of state security and frame Islamic terrorism as a potential threat to India. Articles discussed, for instance, recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai and Bangladesh, and raised concerns regarding India’s geopolitical position. At the same time, they also challenged the professional media for their ‘elitist stance’, albeit in a somewhat banal manner. Keywords in this period included terms related to the BJP’s election campaign and the developmental narrative propagated by Narendra Modi.

Negative



Positive



Among the content categorised as ‘neutral’, the two most prominent words are Hindu and Muslim, which stand out as an odd polarity. Intriguingly, OplIndia also covered ISI/ISIS, other religious fundamental groups, and terrorism in a neutral tone.



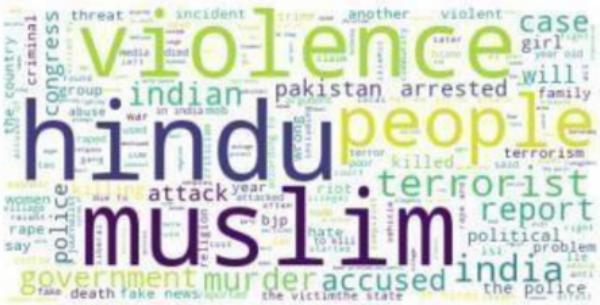
Hinduphobia period: 2017 and 2018

In 2017 and 2018, we observed an increasing polarity between coverage on Hindus and Muslims in OplIndia reporting. Notably, the narrative considerably shifted from banal geopolitical and critical right-wing reporting, towards questioning the 'safety and well-being' of Hindus. In both 2017 and 2018, OplIndia constructed a negative narrative, in which Hindus were framed as victims and Muslims as murderers, terrorists and otherwise problematic. Content with a positive sentiment showed a growing affinity to the 'party', which we interpret as 'Bhartiya Janta Party' (BJP). Importantly, in 2018 OplIndia was subject to a leadership change, as RSS affiliates assumed senior positions in the news outlets. As such, while 2017 and 2018 produced other newsworthy topics, and while much debate occurred in other news outlets on taxation policies such as the GST, the focus of OplIndia shifted to polarizing issues. Hindu and Muslim stand out as keywords in each sentiment category, indicating a sharp polarization.

Negative (2017)



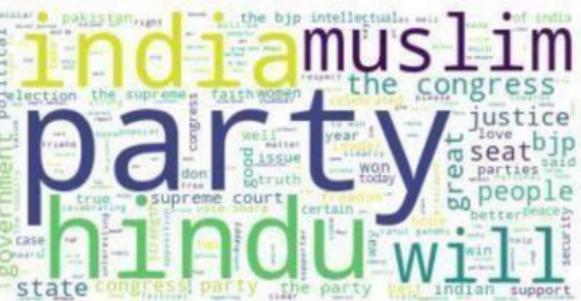
Negative (2018)



Positive (2017)



Positive (2018)



Neutral (2017)



Neutral (2018)

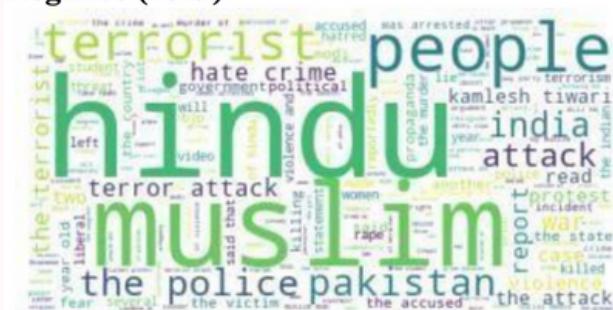


Exclusion Period: 2019

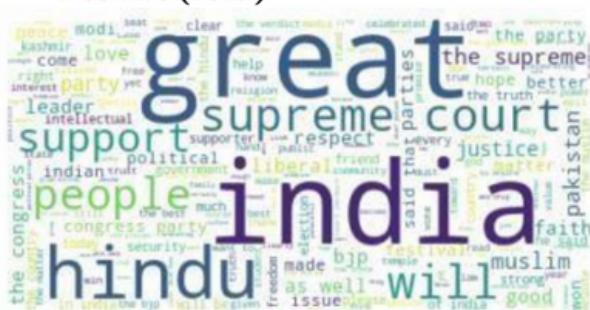
In 2019, OplIndia's website exhibited a growth in traction and monetisation revenue from intermediary platforms like Google AdSense. Simultaneously, OplIndia showed a considerable surge in the amount of articles mentioning Muslims. While the preceding years produced only approximately 600 articles that referred to Muslims, the number of articles almost tripled to over 1800 articles in total by 2019. Along with an increase in frequency in general, misrepresentation, fake news, and outright propaganda by OplIndia also increased during this period. The 2019 negative sentiment cloud shows a, yet again, increased polarisation between Hindu and Muslims, and an increase in the invocation of 'hate crime' (religiously motivated), 'terrorism', and 'attack'. OplIndia actively promoted a narrative in which Muslims are responsible for attacks on Hindu and India, while also negatively talking about the role of law enforcement, portraying them as passive players in Muslim-led crimes. Additionally, OplIndia also asserted that Pakistan was formed as a Muslim state, wherefore it pitched the Indian Muslim community as 'outsiders' and

suggested that their loyalties lie with Pakistan. At the same time, the 2019 word cloud showed a reduction in the use of the term ‘Muslim’ with a positive connotation, while ‘India’, ‘great’ and ‘hindu’ gained prominence – as such, the positive sentiment word cloud of 2019 can be summed up in three words that nearly form a slogan: ‘India: Great Hindu’ (Nation). Indeed, OPIIndia actively produced content strengthening the narrative of ‘historic greatness’ of India as a Hindu Nation. Crucially, Kashmir and the unilateral abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution changing Kashmir’s constitutional status were arguably the biggest event in the Indian political sphere in 2019; however, mentions of ‘Kashmir’ are not among OPIIndia’s most frequently used words in any sentiment category.

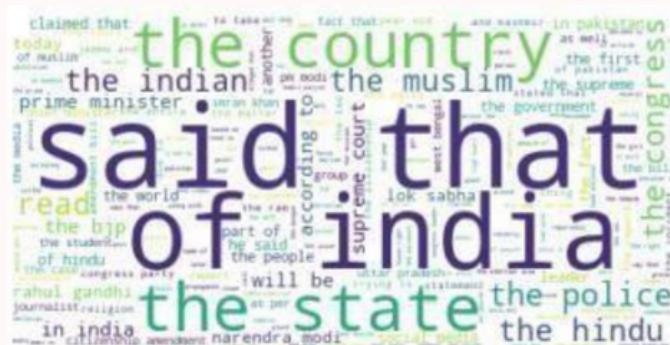
Negative (2019)



Positive (2019)



Interestingly, the neutral sentiment of 2019 word cloud carried a lot of noise, as shown in the image below. Apart from those noise words, the most common terms used in a neutral context were ‘prime minister’, ‘the Hindu’, ‘the Muslim’, ‘the congress party’.



From our analysis, it emerges that the narratives built by OplIndia over time became increasingly communal, Islamophobic and insidious in nature. OplIndia, just as several other news channels within India, identify themselves as non-partisan and centre-right aligned. While some of them like The Frustrated Indian and Swarajya Mag appear to have overlapping leadership and are affiliated with the RSS, the exact details require further investigation. Irrespective of network connection, affiliations, or alignments, OplIndia and similar propaganda websites clearly shows an upward trend in hate speech and polarisation in India.

Laws Relating to Hate Speech in India

Discourse around fake news, propaganda and hate speech has become increasingly relevant in modern democracies. India as one of the largest democracies of the world has seen an exponential rise in hate speech, propaganda and fake news in recent years. Recently the Indian Chief Justice in the Tablighi Jamat case has once again expressed serious concerns against hate speech and have asked coherent suggestions towards defining and countering propaganda and hate speech.^[7]

In the following section we identify and discuss the jurisprudence on Freedom of Speech, hate speech, fake news and propaganda in India. Within the Indian legal sphere, there are laws which can be potentially utilised to confront hateful media activities, but are subject to several limitations. We assert that such limitations are not only based on the limited definition of the hate speech, but also on (a) power imbalances within the premise of hate speech which needs further acceptance in Indian context, (b) misappropriation of law that further jeopardises the rights of minority communities and (c) impunity resting in the hand of those in power in regards to allegations of hate speech^[8]. The section below gives a comprehensive overview of the primary laws and existing jurisprudence concerning hate speech in India. Notably, the *actus reus*, or criminalised act, concentrates on potential disturbances of the ‘public order’, instead of focusing on the protection of minorities or on principles against discrimination and dehumanisation. This focus on ‘public order’ has been a key premise in Supreme Court rulings regarding published content. As the public order is based on the fulfilment of majority demands and expectations, this means that majority groups are less likely to be seen as disrupting public order. It must be noted here that a First Information Report (FIR) under section 295(a) of IPC was filed against the editors of OplIndia for inciting hate. However, this FIR was nullified by the lower judiciary on the grounds that the FIR may lead to mass protest from the supporters of OplIndia, reiterating the impunity of those whose ranks count many members and supporters^[9].

Freedom of Speech in India

Freedom of speech and expression are the hallmark of a democratic society, as they enable vibrant, multi-faceted public interest debates that give voice to different perspectives and viewpoints. The right of everyone to be heard, to speak and to participate in political, artistic, and social life are integral to the attainment and enjoyment of equality. When people are denied public participation, their issues, experiences, and concerns are rendered invisible, and they become more vulnerable to bigotry, prejudice, and marginalisation. As the largest plural democracy in the world, India has enshrined freedom of speech and freedom of expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution^[11]. This guarantee includes the right to freedom of opinion and expression through any medium of communication, and includes the right to seek information^[10].

Reasonable Restrictions

The Constitution of India under Article 19(2) sets grounds for reasonable restriction, and the Indian Parliament and the Supreme court of India has further interpreted the scope of such reasonable restrictions on the grounds of security of the state, individual privacy, friendly relations with foreign states[11], sovereignty and integrity of India [12], public order[13], decency and morality[14], defamation[15], and incitement to an offence [16].

India is also party to the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Article 4 of which promulgates that particularly member states must criminalise hate speech.

Banning speech acts under electoral laws

Section 8 of the Representation of The People Act, 1951 disqualifies a person from contesting in an election if they are convicted for indulging in acts amounting to illegitimate use of freedom of speech and expression. Sections 123(3A) and 125 of the same Act prohibit the promotion of enmity on grounds of religion, race, caste, community or language in connection with elections, and condemn it as a corrupt electoral practice. In *Abhiram Singh vs CD Commachen (dead) by lrs & ors.* [1996 SCC (1) 169], the Supreme Court held that the ascription of 'corrupt electoral practices' also applies to voters, therefore promulgating that the promotion of enmity on grounds of religion, race, caste, community or language is also prohibited for voters and campaigners, not just the candidate.

Speech Acts under Civil Jurisprudence

Section 7 of Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 penalizes incitement to and encouragement of untouchability through words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise. Section 3(g) of the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1988 prohibits religious institutions or their managers to allow the use of any premise for promoting or attempting to promote disharmony, feelings of enmity, hatred, ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities. Overall, hate speech, including acts of written speech directed towards creating communal disharmony, animosity and ill-will on grounds of gender, race, caste, class and religion, are widely prohibited under the Indian legal system. However, the standing of Supreme Court, has not been very consistent as can be seen from the case laws. For example in *Ramesh vs Union of India* [AIR 1988 SC 775], the Supreme Court held that the TV series aimed at building awareness of violence and the triumph of good over evil, and therefore does not violate s.5B of the Cinematography Act, 1952 nor S.153A of the IPC, despite the negative description of a religious group in the TV series.

Similarly, in Baburao Patel vs State of Delhi (AIR 1980 SC 763), two articles in a monthly magazine – ‘A tale of two communalisms’ and ‘Lingering disgrace of history’ – were found not in violation of S. 153A of IPC. The writer, who was convicted in two separate cases by the High Court, was discharged by the Supreme Court. And in State of Maharashtra & ors vs Sangharaj Damodar Rupawate & ors ((2010) 7 SCC 298), the Supreme Court used ‘ground occurrences of wide-spread protest’ to forfeit James W Laine’s book Shivaji-Hindu King in Islamic India. The Court argued that if any piece of work led to the creation of public disorder, even the fact that it contains historical truth does not constitute an acceptable defence.

Fake News and Propaganda

It is our opinion that several laws in India prohibit select forms of speech as an exception to freedom of speech. While those laws do not explicitly define hate speech, fake news or propaganda, Indian jurisprudence has the capacity to ban speech which may disrupt public order, promotes enmity amongst groups, is seditious, or is detrimental to India’s foreign relationship. In State of UP vs Lalai Singh Yadav [AIR 1977 SC 202], the Supreme Court ordered forfeiture of every published copy of a Hindi-language book published by the state government. The Court argued the book promoted hate, enmity and ill-will against believers of the Hindu strand that follows Vaishnava Sampradaya. The Court found the publication in violation of S.153A(1)(a) and 295A of IPC, and held that India is a secular nation in which the government is deeply obligated to preserve and protect society against breaches caused by offensive publications intended to provoke or outrage groups into possible violent action. Section 298 IPC criminalises speech and expression acts that are deliberate attempts to wound the religious feelings of any person[17].

Section 505 IPC penalises publication or circulation of any statement, rumour or report causing public mischief and enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes. The Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), especially Sections 95, 107, and 144 empowers law enforcement agencies to take appropriate actions against any person propagating communal or group-based hate through speech or written act.

Intermediary and Tech responsibility

Since 1990, the Indian government has also attempted to combat the spread of communal hate and disharmony through fast media. Given the growth of cable TV, Sections 5 and 6 of the Cable Television Network Regulation Act were adopted to prohibit the transmission or retransmission of a program through cable network if it contains hateful speech against a religious group, social group, or individual[18]. Similar restrictions were put in place for the advertising agencies as well through the of the Cable Television Network Rules, 1994. More recently, under the IT Act of India, while attempts were made to pin the responsibility of the third part ad providers, the responsibility to provide hate-free content continues to rest with the people directly responsible for its creation.

Through its section 66A, the Act tries to provide an encompassing definition of hate speech on the internet. However, in Shreya Singhal vs Union of India (AIR 2015 SC 1523) the Indian Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional on grounds of being too vague, allowing abuse of power. While in the present case, OplIndia is the direct publisher of the content and thus can come under the purview of other criminal and civil laws pertaining to hate speech and fake news, it is worth noting that the IT Act of India in some ways absolves intermediaries such as Google AdSense, even though they are responsible for the monetisation and hence success of OplIndia. However, as we highlight in the section below, several advertisers have come forward to distance themselves from OplIndia due to their brand commitment against hate speech.

Campaign

In response to the lack of checks and balances within the domain of law to curtail hate-speech Stichting the London Story along with Stop Funding Hate and several diaspora volunteers launched dedicated Twitter campaigns politely asking advertisers to stop their automated Ad funding from going to OplIndia. Such calls for solidarity were based on value judgement of brands commitment as an inclusive business and their stand against negative Islamophobic stereotyping of Muslims. As of the time of publishing of this report, 32 companies have publicly readjusted their advertisement in regards to OplIndia. The campaign goes on to show that virtual spaces are geographies of active citizenship where, citizens need to actively participate to stop disinformation and hate-speech from getting amplified.

Recommendations

The right to free speech is the bedrock of modern society, this right, as has been opined by many legal scholars and philosophers, is not absolute. Words have consequences, and the repercussions and negative externalities of some speech acts may far outweigh the value of the liberty of an individual to express themselves freely. Hate speech often hides behind the guise of free speech while effectively promoting violence against and the dehumanisation of groups of people.

Drawing from the existing jurisprudence on free speech and India's national and international obligations, and reaffirming the fundamental importance of freedom of expression and opinion, tolerance, and respect for the equal dignity of all human beings for a democratic and pluralistic society [Article 19 (1) (a), Constitution of India], we invite relevant parties to define hate speech as:

Abusive or threatening speech, writing behaviour, or behaviour that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language that expresses prejudice against a particular group or persons, on the basis of race, religion, caste, nationality and sexual orientation.

We further define hate speech as:

the advocacy, promotion or incitement, in any form, of the denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression, on the ground of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, gender identity or sexual orientation and other personal characteristics or status.

We invite relevant actors to:

- Take strict action against media houses like OplIndia on grounds of religious discrimination, othering and dehumanisation.
- Accept that freedom of expression and opinion are not an unqualified right and that it must not be exercised in a manner inconsistent with the rights of others.
- Recognise that hate speech may take the form of the public denial, trivialisation, justification or condonation of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes which have been found by courts to have occurred, and of the glorification of persons convicted for having committed such crimes.
- Recognise that states as well as big businesses increasingly have international obligations against the rise of racism, racial discrimination, casteism, gender-based discrimination, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, islamophobia, and intolerance, as well as genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes and the public denial, trivialisation, justification or condonation of such crimes.
- Recognise that forms of expression that offend, shock or disturb will not on that account alone amount to hate speech and that action against the use of hate speech should serve to protect individuals and groups of persons rather than particular beliefs, ideologies or religions.

- Recognise that the use of hate speech can reflect or promote the unjustified assumption that the user is in some way superior to a person or a group of persons that is or are targeted by it.
- Recognise that the use of hate speech may be intended to incite, or reasonably expected to have the effect of inciting others to commit, acts of violence, intimidation, hostility or discrimination against those who are targeted by it and that this is an especially serious form of such speech.
- Adopt self-regulatory and voluntary codes of conduct as an effective means of preventing and condemning the use of hate speech.
- Stop supporting organisations or collective groups that continue to facilitate the use of hate speech.
- Conduct prompt and effective investigations into complaints about hate speech.

Notes

[1] Prashanth Bhat and Kalyani Chadha (2020), Anti-media populism: Expressions of media distrust by right-wing media in India, *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 13(2), 166-182

[2] Tine Ustad Figenschou and Karoline Andrea Ihlebæk (2019), Challenging journalistic authority. *Journalism Studies* 20(9), p. 1223

[3] Fredrik Stiernstedt (2014), *Introduktion till Mediekritiken. Mediekritik* (pp. 7– 21).

[4] Matt Carlson (2017), *Journalistic authority: Legitimizing news in the digital era.* Columbia University Press, p.182

[5] Edward Loper and Steven Bird, *NLTK: The Natural Language Toolkit*, <https://arxiv.org/abs/cs/0205028>

[6] https://github.com/amueller/word_cloud

[7] In *Pravasi Bhalai Sangathan v, Union of India & Ors.*, [AIR 2014 SC 1591] Supreme Court of India observed that the issue of hate speech deserved deeper consideration by the Law Commission of India. Subsequently in 2017 the Law commission of India released its report on Hate speech in India, wherein the Law Commission did not clearly outline what should construct hate speech leaving the question open to academic discourse and deliberation (<http://lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/reports/Report267.pdf>).

[8] We speak of impunity in the wider context of violence in India in our March and June 2020 briefing, where we recorded details of hate speech, incitement to violence and propaganda that led to the Delhi Riots on March 23, 2020, where 50 persons (predominantly Muslim) lost their lives. The briefing further compiles and documents detailed testimonies of victims of violence, including minor Muslim boys who were kidnapped and abused by law enforcement agents under the pretext of pre-emptive arrests.

[9] <https://www.freepressjournal.in/india/why-bihar-police-filed-an-fir-against-opindia-and-other-rightwingwebsite-against-minors-death>

[10] Importantly, only all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression.

[11] In *Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras* [AIR 1950 SC 124] Supreme Court declared freedom of press as a part of freedom of speech and expression. In *Brij Bhushan v. State of Delhi* [AIR 1950 SC 129], the validity of order imposing pre-censorship on English Weekly of Delhi was struck down by court. In *Sakal Papers Ltd. v. Union of India*, [AIR 1962 SC 305] and in *Bennett Coleman and Co. v. Union of India*, [AIR 1973 SC 106], the validity of the Newsprint Control Order, fixing the maximum number of pages, was struck down by the Supreme Court of India holding it to be violative of Article 19(1)(a). In *Indian Express v. Union of India* [(1985) 1 SCC 641]

[12] This ground was added by the Constitution (First Amendment) Act of 1951 in light of the anti-immigrant sentiments and insidious remarks made against Pakistan which were seen as hampering friendly relationships in the region.

[13] This ground was added subsequently by the Constitution (Sixteenth Amendment) Act, 1963. This is aimed to prohibit anyone from making the statements that challenge the integrity and sovereignty of India.

[14] In *Om Prakash v. Emperor*, [AIR 1948 Nag, 199], the Supreme Court held that 'public order' connotes the sense of public peace, safety and tranquility. The court also held that deliberate utterances hurting the religious feelings of any class will validate reasonable restriction aimed at maintaining the public order. However, criticism of the government does not necessarily disturb public order.

[15] Sections 292-294 of the Indian Penal Code provide instances of restrictions on the freedom of speech and expression on the grounds of decency and morality. They prohibit the sale or distribution or exhibition of obscene words: In *Ranjit Udeshi v. State of Maharashtra* [AIR 1965 SC 881], the Supreme Court upheld the conviction of a book seller who was prosecuted under Section 292, I.P.C. for selling and keeping the book *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

[16] Article 19(2) prevents any person from making any statement that defames the reputation of another. Defamation is a crime in India under Section 499 and 500 of the I.P.C.

[17] This ground was also added by the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951. The Constitution also prohibits a person from making any statement that incites people to commit an offence.

[18] Uttering, words, etc., with deliberate intent to wound the religious feelings of any person.—Whoever, with the deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of any person, utters any word or makes any sound in the hearing of that person or makes any gesture in the sight of that person or places, any object in the sight of that person, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine, or with both.

[19] Rule 6: No programme should be carried in the cable service which (a) Contains attack on religions or communities or visuals or words contemptuous of religious groups or which promote communal attitudes; (b) Contains anything obscene, defamatory, deliberate, false and suggestive innuendos and half-truths; (c) Is likely to encourage or incite violence or contains anything against maintenance of law and order or which promote antinational attitudes; (d) Criticizes, maligns or slanders any individual in person or certain groups, segments of social, public and moral life of the country; (e) Contains visuals or words which reflect a slandering, ironical -and snobbish attitude in the portrayal of certain ethnic, linguistic and regional groups.

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We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to counter online hate speech

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