

1. General Information: Hate Crime Definition

A hate crime (also known as a bias crime) is a crime where a perpetrator targets a victim due to their physical appearance or perceived membership in a specific social group. Such groups may include race, ethnicity, disability, language, nationality, political views, age, religion, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Non-criminal actions motivated by these biases are often termed “bias incidents.” For example, hate crimes may include physical assault, homicide, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse, offensive graffiti, or hate mail.

History of Hate Crimes

The term “hate crime” gained common usage in the U.S. during the 1980s, although similar crimes have historical roots. Historical examples include the Roman persecution of Christians, the Nazi genocide of Jews, and European colonial violence against indigenous peoples. In the U.S., lynching of African Americans, cross burnings, and attacks on minority ethnic and LGBTQ+ communities were prevalent. More recently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Chinese violence surged due to blame associated with the virus, as documented by organizations like the “NEVER AGAIN” Association in Poland.

Psychological Effects of Hate Crimes

Hate crimes have severe psychological impacts. Individuals may experience trauma, depression, and low self-esteem, while targeted groups often feel increased fear and vulnerability. For broader communities, hate crimes can create division and weaken multicultural cohesion. Victims may suffer from PTSD, depression, and avoidance behaviors. Studies indicate that hate crimes also negatively impact educational and socioeconomic outcomes for the affected groups.

Motivation Behind Hate Crimes

The primary motives behind hate crimes, as identified by sociologists like Jack McDevitt and Jack Levin, include thrill-seeking (committed for excitement, often by groups targeting vulnerable individuals), defensive motives (protecting one’s community from perceived threats), retaliatory motives (revenge for perceived offenses), and mission-oriented crimes (ideologically motivated, often targeting symbolically significant sites). The Self-Control Theory provides insights into the motivations behind hate crimes, suggesting that social, cultural, and individual factors contribute to these biases. Offenders often develop biases through social interaction and exposure to biased media.

Risk Management for Hate Crime Offenders

Research on risk management tools for hate crime offenders is limited. However, commonly used tools include the Violence Risk Appraisal Guide (VRAG) and the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) to evaluate recidivism risks.

2. Understanding Your Rights in Germany

In Germany, hate crimes are not defined as a separate offense. Instead, courts can enhance penalties if a bias motivation is proven. Section 46 of the German Criminal Code (StGB) allows bias motivation, such as hatred based on race, religion, or sexual orientation, to be considered during sentencing. Civil actions are less common, as hate crime cases usually fall under criminal jurisdiction, although individuals can pursue remedies for discrimination under laws like the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG).

The German Criminal Code includes several sections addressing hate crimes:

- Section 46 StGB: Allows courts to consider discriminatory motives during sentencing, enhancing penalties for bias-motivated crimes.
- Section 130 StGB (Volksverhetzung): Specifically targets incitement to hatred, hate speech, and acts intended to incite violence against racial, religious, and national communities.
- Section 166 StGB: Criminalizes public defamation of religious groups if it threatens public peace.
- The Basic Law (Grundgesetz, GG): Article 4 ensures freedom of religion, while Article 3 prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or religion. Additionally, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) reinforces Germany's anti-racist measures.

Germany emphasizes preventing incitement to violence and protecting marginalized communities by integrating criminal sanctions (for severe acts like hate speech or violence) with civil protections against discrimination.

3. Steps to Report a Hate Crime in Germany

- 1.Document the Incident: Gather information about the event, including photos, videos, witness statements, and detailed descriptions of what happened (time, location, and identifying features of the perpetrator).
- 2.Preserve Digital Evidence: Save any online messages, emails, or social media posts related to the incident. Screenshots are useful if hate speech or threats occurred online.
- 3.Prepare for Language Barriers: If you don't speak German, it may be helpful to bring someone who can assist with translation when reporting the incident at a police station.
- 4.Visit Your Local Police Station: Bring all collected documentation and explain the details to the officer, emphasizing that it was a hate crime. Request a case reference number for future follow-ups.
- 5.Report Online: If unable to visit a police station, you can file a report online via local authorities' websites, such as the Berlin Police Online Reporting Portal.
- 6.Seek Additional Support: If needed, reach out to organizations like ReachOut Berlin for translation support, legal assistance, or mental health counseling.

4. Local Resources: NGOs, Legal Aid, Counseling

Germany offers numerous resources to support victims of hate crimes. Below, you'll find information on reporting mechanisms, mental health support, legal aid, and organizations that combat hate speech.

Reporting Mechanisms

The Online Strafanzeige platform allows individuals to file criminal complaints online, including hate crimes. It is managed by local police authorities, with specific contact details varying by federal state. More information is available at online-strafanzeige.de

Another resource, **Meldestelle Respect!**, offers a platform to report hate speech and receive expert analysis. They can be contacted via email at info@meldestelle-respect.de or through their website meldestelle-respect.de

Additionally, the Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes (Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency) provides counseling and support for those facing discrimination, including hate crimes. Contact them through the form available on their website at antidiskriminierungsstelle.de

Mental Health and Coping Strategies

For psychological support, the platform **You Are Not Alone** provides tips and resources to help cope with the impact of hate crimes. You can access their resources at youarenotalone.ai

Legal Aid and Financial Assistance

HateAid provides financial support for legal proceedings related to digital violence and hate crimes. For assistance, reach out via email at legal@hateaid.org or visit hateaid.org

Organizations Against Hate Speech

The Kompetenznetzwerk Hass im Netz is a network dedicated to combating hate speech through various initiatives. Contact them at info@kompetenznetzwerk-hass-im-netz.de or visit kompetenznetzwerk-hass-im-netz.de

Neue deutsche Medienmacher*innen promotes diversity in media to counter hate speech. Reach them at info@neuemedienmacher.de or visit neuemedienmacher.de

The Gesellschaft für Freiheitsrechte – Marie Munk Initiative works to protect democracy by addressing hate speech through legal channels. Contact them at info@freiheitsrechte.org or explore their work at freiheitsrechte.org

Ich Bin Hier e.V. empowers individuals through education and events to combat online hate speech. Contact them at info@ichbinhier.eu or visit ichbinhier.eu

Religion-Based Hate Crime Resources

The project Get The Trolls Out! addresses hate speech related to religion through media monitoring and campaigns. For more information, contact them at info@getthetrollsout.org or visit getthetrollsout.org.

Local Support Resources for Victims in Berlin

- The Berlin Police – Hate Crime Prevention unit offers information and support. Contact them at +49 30 4664 979 444 or visit berlin.de.
- Roots Berlin provides counseling for victims of discrimination and hate crimes. Reach them at info@rootsberlin.com or visit rootsberlin.com.
- KOP – Campaign for Victims of Police Violence supports individuals affected by police violence and hate crimes. Contact them at info@kop-berlin.de or visit kop-berlin.de.
- The Verband der Beratungsstellen für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt (VBRG) offers counseling, legal assistance, and advocacy for victims of right-wing, racist, and anti-Semitic violence across Germany. Reach them at info@verband-brg.de or visit verband-brg.de.

LGBTQ+ and Minority Support Organizations

- **GLADT e.V.** is a multilingual organization supporting Black and People of Color (LGBTQ+) in Berlin who face discrimination. For assistance, contact them at info@gladt.de or visit gladt.de

- Hydra e.V. offers support and counseling for sex workers in Berlin, including those facing violence or discrimination. Contact them at info@hydra-berlin.de or visit hydra-berlin.de
- **LesMigraS** provides counseling and support for lesbian, bisexual women, and trans* individuals facing discrimination or violence. Contact them at lesmigras@lesmigras.de or visit lesmigras.de

Anti-Discrimination Networks

The Antidiskriminierungsverband Deutschland (advd) is a network of anti-discrimination offices that offers counseling and advocacy for victims of discrimination. Contact them at info@antidiskriminierung.org