



Media and Hate Speech: Its Impact on Women and the LGBTQIA++ Community in Tunisia

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Executive Summary

This report provides an overview and analysis of the patterns of hate speech directed at women and LGBTQIA++ individuals, highlighting the various forms of oppression and violence they face. This discourse is disseminated through audiovisual media, particularly highly viewed talk shows, as well as social media platforms, which serve as fertile ground for its spread. Hate speech takes multiple forms, including dehumanization, stigmatization and defamation, incitement to violence, negative stereotyping, religious or cultural justification, mockery and humiliation, as well as exclusion and marginalization.

Hate speech spreads through audiovisual media, especially talk shows, and digital platforms. It reinforces discrimination and worsens social and political crises. This report examines its deep societal impact, particularly how it fosters discrimination and social stigma. These factors isolate victims from public life and limit their opportunities.

The report also explores how political authorities use hate speech to suppress dissent and silence critics. This entrenches discrimination and normalizes its public practice against women and the LGBTQIA++ community. As a result, social tensions rise, and hostility toward gender diversity grows. Additionally, the spread of hate speech has severe consequences on public spaces, which now face unprecedented restrictions.

Introduction:

Hate speech directed at women and the LGBTQIA++ community is a reflection of deeply ingrained biases and systemic discrimination. While it remains a global issue, its persistence necessitates firm and effective measures for its eradication.

In recent years, Tunisia has seen a sharp rise in incitement and hate rhetoric, particularly over the past three years. This escalation has been fueled by political discourse embraced by the authorities, embedding hate speech against marginalized groups into official narratives.

Hate speech contributes to escalating violence and reinforces discrimination across various media platforms. It spreads through traditional audiovisual media, such as television and radio programs, as well as digital platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. It manifests in multiple forms, including offensive language, derogatory remarks, stigmatization, harmful comparisons, and demeaning portrayals through images, videos, and gestures.

This discourse is also prevalent in satirical videos and short comedysketcheson social media, which reinforce discriminatory attitudes and target individuals and groups based on their perceived differences. The severity of hate speech can be categorized into three levels. The most extreme involves explicit incitement to violence, lynching, or murder—offenses criminalized under national laws, including Tunisian penal codes that prohibit incitement to murder. International human rights treaties also classify such speech as unlawful, making this

category the easiest to identify and prosecute.

Hate speech varies in severity across three levels. The most extreme is explicit and direct incitement to violence, lynching, or forced displacement of individuals or groups. This form of hate speech is classified as a criminal offense under national laws. In Tunisia, for instance, penal codes explicitly prohibit incitement to murder. International law also criminalizes this type of speech through human rights treaties. Due to its overt nature, it is relatively easy to identify and legally prosecute. The second level is legally less severe, as it is not classified as a felony but rather as a misdemeanor. It typically includes defamation and slander, which may lead to administrative penalties or disciplinary actions imposed by institutions and organizations based on their internal regulations.

The third and most widespread level, both in Tunisia and globally, consists of non-criminalized forms of hate speech. Although individuals cannot be legally prosecuted for this type of discourse, it poses a significant threat to social cohesion and mutual respect. This category is characterized by the absence of explicit calls for violence or elimination, relying instead on generalizations and implicit biases.

Despite the strong reactions these forms of speech provoke, hate speech targeting women and the LGBTQIA++ community is often overlooked, dismissed, or even justified. This normalization further entrenches its presence and prevents it from being widely recognized as hate speech.

Over the past three years, Tunisia has witnessed a dangerous rise in hate speech against women and LGBTQIA++ individuals. This trend is particularly evident in television programs, where discriminatory rhetoric appears in multiple forms. In some cases, it is direct and explicit, reinforcing patriarchal

and anti-LGBTQIA++ ideologies, especially in talk shows and social commentary programs. In other cases, it is more subtle, embedded in entertainment and comedy content.

Social media platforms have become another major avenue for the proliferation of hate speech and incitement to violence. This surge is driven by individuals who propagate misogyny and homophobia, as well as by platform algorithms that amplify inflammatory and controversial content due to its high engagement potential. The ease of sharing content, coupled with misinformation and fabricated narratives, further accelerates the spread of harmful discourse.

The increasing prevalence of hate speech and incitement to violence undermines social cohesion and tolerance, causing psychological, emotional, and physical harm to targeted individuals and groups—particularly women and LGBTQIA++ people. This discourse heightens their exposure to verbal and physical violence while reinforcing social, economic, and political marginalization. In the long run, these patterns erode communal harmony, paving the way for serious human rights violations, such as gender-based violence, public lynchings, and the persecution of LGBTQIA++ individuals. As tensions rise between different social groups, cycles of hostility and retaliation continue to deepen.

Background:

Hate speech has deep historical and social roots, yet it has seen a sharp increase in recent years, particularly with the rise of social media and the growing influence of conservative narratives in both media and politics. This rhetoric is driven by a combination of cultural, religious, legal, and political factors, making it more complex and widespread.

Women and LGBTQIA++ individuals in Arab societies face challenges that are deeply intertwined with tradition, history, and, at times, religious interpretations. The LGBTQIA++ community experiences systemic oppression that threatens its existence and safety, while women—despite some legislative progress in Tunisia—continue to face social, legal, and political restrictions. A double standard persists, as the same legal framework that grants certain rights to women simultaneously criminalizes the fundamental rights of LGBTQIA++ individuals. Since 2021, this phenomenon has worsened, particularly after the political shift on July 25, amid a surge in human rights violations. The rise in hate speech has exacerbated social and cultural discrimination, disproportionately targeting women and LGBTQIA++ individuals both in daily life and through media platforms. Media outlets often exploit this rhetoric to boost viewership, contributing to the belittlement of women, the erasure of their achievements, and the reinforcement of gender-based discrimination.

The escalation of hate speech has directly contributed to alarming levels of gender-based violence. Official reports have documented a disturbing increase in violence against women. In 2021 alone, regional women and family affairs directorates recorded 2,484 cases of violence.

That same year, specialized units for crimes of violence against

women and children handled approximately 69,000 cases, with %58 involving physical violence, %31 psychological violence, %5 economic violence, and %6 sexual violence. Additionally, educational institutions recorded 2,928 cases of school-based violence, including %6 physical violence and %33 verbal abuse. Social affairs agencies also intervened in approximately 2,633 cases of victims of violence.

In May 2023, the Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and Seniors updated this data, revealing that %81 of gender-based violence cases involved domestic violence—an increase from %72 in the previous reporting period (March 25–April 2023 ,25). According to the latest statistics, the national domestic violence helpline (1899) received 1,899 calls between April 25 and May ,25 2023. This marked a -1.5fold increase from the previous period (March 25–April 2023 ,25), which recorded 1,106 calls.

Regarding caller demographics, %27 of the women seeking assistance were aged 30 to 63) 39 cases), while %19 were aged 40 to 44) 49 cases). In terms of education, %18 of victims had a university degree (41 cases), %22 had completed secondary education, %16 had a middle school education, and fewer than %5 were illiterate.

Additionally, %73 of the women who contacted the helpline were married (169 cases). Reports of gender-based violence in 2023 were recorded across nearly all Tunisian governorates, with the highest number of calls coming from Greater Tunis. The highest figures were reported in Ben Arous (38 cases), Tunis (30 cases), Ariana (22 cases), and Manouba (10 cases). Other affected governorates included Nabeul (18 cases), Bizerte (14 cases), Sousse (14 cases), Sfax (12 cases), and Kairouan (11 cases).

Similarly, no official data or statistics document the number of violent incidents targeting the LGBTQIA++ community, despite

the existence of some estimates. This absence of official records is a direct result of the state's persistent disregard for the existence of this community, hindering any systematic effort to monitor such violations. While human rights organizations continue their efforts to defend LGBTQIA++ individuals, crimes committed against them are still classified as isolated incidents rather than being acknowledged as acts motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity. This deliberate obscuring of reality reinforces the perception that the LGBTQIA++ community is merely a marginal minority, rather than recognizing the extent of discrimination and violence they endure.

This systemic discrimination is also evident in state policies that perpetuate repression through strict legal penalties and oppressive security practices. Daily police harassment, arbitrary detentions, and continuous targeting of human rights organizations—sometimes escalating into smear campaigns against activists—exemplify the state's role in sustaining violence against the community.

Hate speech against women and LGBTQIA++ individuals in Tunisia remains a deeply rooted and multifaceted issue, shaped by historical, social, and political factors. Addressing it requires a concerted effort from civil society, media, and state institutions to create a more just and inclusive society for all.

Methodology

In preparing this report, Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms systematically monitored and analyzed media content across traditional and digital platforms. The study reviewed 177 video clips from programs aired between 2023 and 2024, including 136 episodes broadcast on television and social media platforms. The report also incorporates findings from Intersection Association's own reports, as well as research conducted by local and international human rights organizations focusing on the rights of women and LGBTQIA++ individuals. Additionally, 10 interviews were conducted with LGBTQIA++ activists, academics, and human rights defenders to provide qualitative insights into the impact of hate speech.

This report examines hate speech targeting women and LGBTQIA++ individuals across traditional media and digital platforms, evaluating its role in fueling human rights violations in Tunisia, particularly those affecting women's rights. It further explores the social and legal consequences of hate speech on LGBTQIA++ individuals and its contribution to the rising levels of violence against these marginalized groups.

Patterns of Hate Speech Against Women

"Hate speech is a broad and imprecise term, yet it carries words and expressions that, in some cases, inflict greater harm than physical violence. Its consequences can be catastrophic, sometimes culminating in violent practices such as murder and public lynching."

Hate speech directed at women is a widespread phenomenon that negatively impacts their participation in public spaces, whether in daily life, online, or in Tunisian media. This report examines this issue by analyzing a selection of programs broadcast between 2021 and 2024 on various Tunisian television channels, revealing the escalation and diversification of hate speech forms.

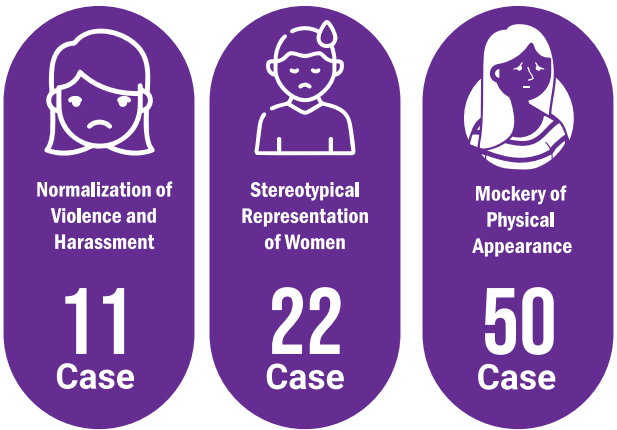
Talk show hosts and their guests—including actors, media personalities, and other public figures—frequently use misogynistic and anti-women rhetoric, often embedding such discourse within various topics. These statements resonate widely with audiences, generating significant engagement and high interaction rates on social media platforms.

The impact of this discourse extends beyond women, affecting society as a whole by creating an unsafe and exclusionary environment that discourages women from actively participating in key sectors such as politics, economics, media, and technology. Moreover, hate speech restricts their ability to express opinions and engage in public discourse, reinforcing a culture of silence around women's issues.

To effectively counter hate speech, it is crucial to first understand and analyze its patterns, allowing for a strategic

approach to dismantling its impact and mitigating its effects. The monitoring process conducted for this report led to the identification of distinct hate speech patterns targeting women. The report examined 6 different media programs, including 5 televised shows and one digital platform-based program. A total of 181 video clips from television episodes and digital content were analyzed, in which 99 instances of hate speech against women were identified. These instances appeared either explicitly, through direct discussions about women, or indirectly, through defamation and verbal attacks between guests.

Classification of Hate Speech Patterns



Distribution of Hate Speech Based on the Gender of the Speakers





Mockery of Physical Appearance

Across the media programs analyzed in this report, a recurring pattern of ridicule and mockery targeting women's physical appearance was observed. This form of hate speech is frequently used in various discussion contexts—either as a comedic device to entertain audiences or as a means to dismiss and belittle other participants. These demeaning practices were perpetuated by TV hosts, guests, recurring panelists, and even through pre-recorded video reports.

This persistent discourse normalizes discrimination based on physical appearance, reinforcing harmful stereotypes that devalue women and reduce them to superficial beauty standards. Such rhetoric undermines the principles of equality and human dignity. Notably, this form of ridicule was recorded 50 times across the televised programs monitored in this report. One of the most common manifestations of appearance-based hate speech against women involves mocking their weight,

clothing, or general looks. These remarks erode women's self-confidence and diminish their social value. Unfortunately, such demeaning rhetoric is often incorporated into entertainment and comedy programs, where women's appearances are exploited for humor, reinforcing gender-based stereotypes and public shaming.

This type of discourse subjects women to superficial stereotyping, where their value is assessed solely based on their physical attributes rather than their abilities or identity. The report also found that such insults and ridicule are frequently used in talk shows, where hosts engage in verbal sparring, often targeting women who have undergone cosmetic procedures.

For instance, in the television show Ahna Labes, during episode 3, a recurring guest, S.Z., commented on the appearance of Safa, stating:

"Other than the fillers and lip injections, you look like Chab Salih."

Beyond body shaming, racial discrimination against women of darker skin tones was also observed. Ghofrane Binous, a Black female TV host, has been subjected to numerous racist comments on various social media platforms, with derogatory comparisons likening her to a monkey and even calls for the reinstatement of slavery. This reflects the deeply ingrained racial biases that persist in media and digital spaces. Furthermore, the report highlights how dominant beauty standards are systematically reinforced, placing immense pressure on women to conform to a singular, unrealistic ideal, leaving no room for diversity.

This incident is far from isolated—it is a recurring pattern

1 Telvza TV Channel, 2024, Ahna Labes | Episode 6 Part 1, January 12.

Last accessed: 18/01/2025

https://youtu.be/SaTwpFRv6K8?si=slvf4HGhvfT_QAnn

across multiple television programs, where mockery of women's physical appearance and body-shaming are consistently used as comedic tools. In Ahna Labes, host B.M. ridiculed a woman's weight, stating: "She was as fat as an elephant." ²This remark highlights the excessive focus on weight as a source of humor. Mockery and bullying based on women's weight reflect a broader cultural tendency to exploit body image as a tool for humiliation, ridicule, and exclusion. These practices manifest in different ways, from direct insults to degrading jokes and subtle insinuations, all of which carry deeply harmful connotations. More significantly, such rhetoric reinforces a narrow societal perception of beauty, rejecting diversity and imposing rigid, exclusionary standards on women.

Similarly, criticism of women's clothing is one of the most prevalent forms of appearance-based hate speech in media and talk shows. Women are frequently shamed if their attire is deemed "revealing" or "immodest" according to prevailing social norms. A striking example occurred in Wahch El Chasha, where TV host S.W. addressed a female guest, a performing artist, saying: "You're standing in front of drunk men, and you're only wearing %20 of your clothes." ³This comment reflects a deep-seated cultural bias that holds women responsible for upholding moral standards, placing them in the position of the guilty party based on their clothing choices and implying that her attire dictated how she deserved to be treated.

2 Telvza TV Channel, 2024, Ahna Labes | Episode 6 Part 2, January 12. Last accessed: 18/01/2025
https://youtu.be/1jn6toJPFFM?si=Z2GcAVLe_wiSVF8P

3 YouTube Channel, 2024, Wahch Pro Max | Season 1 Episode 8 Part 1, May 8, Last accessed on: 19/01/2025
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TKOrGMAmO8&list=PLFApv2COP4ern4le6UvScyqCNjUpuR7y-&index=28>

The host's statement carries an inherent contradiction: it implicitly excuses men's behavior, including alcohol consumption, while simultaneously holding women accountable for their personal choices regarding clothing and appearance. This kind of rhetoric serves to shift blame onto women for any actions taken by men within a patriarchal society. The repeated use of such discourse in media reinforces harmful stereotypes about women, further entrenching an objectifying view of their bodies. This, in turn, undermines women's ability to participate equally in society.

Ultimately, such narratives contribute to a cultural environment steeped in gender biases that diminish women's autonomy. They strip women of the right to make decisions about their own bodies and clothing without being subjected to societal judgment or control.



Gender-Based Discrimination in Media Discourse

Gender discrimination is deeply embedded in media narratives, where it is used to reinforce harmful stereotypes that confine women to traditional roles and limit their opportunities. This bias is particularly evident in public opposition to gender equality, as seen in debates over inheritance laws. For instance, in the television program "The Big Show," actor M.R. openly rejected the principle of equal inheritance rights, justifying his stance with religious arguments.

Such discourse exacerbates gender inequality, legitimizing the continued legal and economic discrimination against women. It also prioritizes religious rhetoric over the concept of equal citizenship, despite the fact that Tunisia defines itself as a civil state. This erasure of women's economic and social contributions is particularly paradoxical, given that Tunisian women are leaders and active participants across various

professional sectors and contribute significantly to household incomes.

Patriarchal control over women's rights is often justified through religious and social arguments, which are used as tools to deny them their fundamental rights. Although Tunisia has seen legislative efforts to advance gender equality, discriminatory practices persist, with media platforms failing to challenge these narratives effectively.

At the same time, media discourse continues to reinforce traditional gender roles, portraying women primarily as caregivers and homemakers while ignoring their broader social and economic contributions. In the program *Wahch El Shasha*, the host commented on motherhood roles, stating: "Sometimes I feel that some mothers don't know how to be mothers. I'm shocked by women who leave their children."

This statement reflects a patriarchal mindset, framing motherhood as a woman's primary function, rather than acknowledging her multiple roles and contributions in society. During the same episode, the host further undermined women's abilities, implying that their success is solely tied to their physical appearance. This sentiment was echoed in "The Big Show", where guest H.G. commented on presenter M.M., stating that she could only succeed in beauty pageants. Such statements perpetuate the stereotype that a woman's value is reduced to her looks, disregarding her intellect, talent, and professional contributions. Ironically, M.M. is a media professional who was actively participating in the program, yet she was publicly diminished and objectified by a guest on the very show she was hosting.

These demeaning remarks reinforce long-standing sexist stereotypes, portraying women solely through the lens of their

familial roles while simultaneously invalidating their emotions and mental well-being. Women are often labeled as “hysterical” or “overreacting”, as if their anger or distress is inherently irrational, rather than a legitimate response to their lived experiences.

This narrative perpetuates the idea that women must conform to rigid societal expectations, playing supportive roles to men rather than pursuing their own ambitions. For example, in Wahch El Shasha, the host stated: "A woman who encourages her husband to pursue his education is a good wife."

This statement reduces a woman's worth to her role as a supporter of men, disregarding her personal aspirations, ambitions, and autonomy. It reinforces the notion that her primary responsibility is to uplift men, rather than pursuing her own success.

In addition to the exclusionary practices that stem from this type of discourse, it also contributes to the erasure of pressing issues and the real challenges faced by women. For instance, women—particularly transgender women—suffer from a blatant form of marginalization, where their existence and their right to self-expression are completely ignored. Trans women in Tunisia experience two distinct forms of treatment: the first involves various types of violence, whether verbal, physical, or economic and the second is related to exclusion or marginalization.

This erasure is further compounded by the exploitation of women's issues and LGBTQIA++ rights as comedic material or subjects of ridicule, stripping these matters of their human and social dimensions. Instead of addressing the real challenges faced by transgender women in Tunisia, their struggles are reduced to entertainment tropes that reinforce stereotypes and undermine the significance of their fight for rights.

Feminist activist and university professor Monia Ben Jemia⁴ emphasizes that hate speech encompasses defamation, insults, slander, and even encouragement of violent acts against others, including incitement. She stresses the importance of referring back to Decree 115, which pertains to press freedom.

She further explained that the spread of hate speech is reinforced by the rhetoric of state officials and the presidency, which often includes accusations of treason and unfounded allegations. This contributes to the normalization and amplification of such discourse. She pointed to other factors that fuel the phenomenon, including the absence of societal dialogue in radio and television programs, the lack of awareness-raising discourse that explains the consequences of violence, and the failure to promote knowledge about equality within educational spaces. Additionally, she highlighted the lack of concrete efforts to combat hate speech. She underscored that one of the primary reasons for the escalation of violence is the absence of deterrence, arguing that the government, through its practices, sends implicit messages that encourage violence by presenting negative models that perpetuate such behavior. This situation reflects the media's failure to take the diversity of Tunisian society seriously and its inability to address various forms of discrimination based on gender identity. Therefore, it is essential to reassess current media practices and work towards fostering content that genuinely represents this diversity, encouraging respect for differences. One way to achieve this is by including trans women as active voices in public discussions and dedicating space to topics relevant to them—free from ridicule or marginalization. Currently, trans women are rarely given the opportunity to express their opinions or share their experiences through traditional media platforms.

As a result of this continued marginalization, the voices of trans

women remain unheard, and their issues are absent from public debates on human rights and equality. Given this reality, Tunisian cinema remains one of the few platforms that shed light on their stories. However, these films are often the product of individual efforts by directors committed to creating space for gender diversity and the narratives of marginalized communities.

Although such films help break the silence surrounding trans women's struggles, they frequently face intense backlash from certain groups that perceive them as an attack on so-called "societal values." Consequently, these works are often accused of promoting "alien" or "unacceptable" ideas, reflecting a broader resistance to change and a desire to uphold the stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream media. Furthermore, this backlash underscores the significant challenges faced by creatives who address issues related to gender identity and LGBTQIA++ rights, further entrenching the systemic exclusion and marginalization within the media and cultural landscape.

In this context, it is worth noting that Tunisian cinema is one of the few media platforms that has portrayed the stories of trans women in Tunisia and shed light on their struggles from different perspectives. However, these attempts remain rare and limited for several reasons and have minimal impact, especially in the face of rising discriminatory discourse and the lack of gender diversity in traditional media.

Cinematic works often emerge as bold attempts to present alternative perspectives that challenge dominant narratives, aiming to highlight the suffering and challenges faced by trans women in Tunisian society. Through personal stories, cinema conveys the hardships of living in a society that still views issues related to gender and sexual identity with skepticism and apprehension. However, this cinematic representation is frequently met with criticism and backlash, as these films are

often accused of contradicting "societal values" or promoting ideas perceived as foreign to Tunisian culture.

In this regard, the role of the media becomes even more critical in providing safe spaces for trans women to participate in public discussions, free from negative or mocking stereotypes. Recognizing the legitimacy of these issues and addressing them seriously is a necessary step toward promoting inclusivity, respect, and dismantling dominant stereotypes. Tunisian media must acknowledge that its role extends beyond merely reporting information; it must actively contribute to building a diverse society that respects the rights of all individuals.

It is crucial to foster a culture of human rights and clarify the fundamental principles that should govern interactions, especially given the media's significant influence on public opinion. Hate speech against women, particularly trans women, fuels violence against them in Tunisia, reinforcing a hostile environment and perpetuating harmful stereotypes. When expressions of hate become normalized, they encourage the acceptance of violence as ordinary behavior.

Furthermore, hate speech contributes to the marginalization of women, preventing them from accessing psychological and legal support, which exacerbates both violence and exclusion. Trans women are particularly vulnerable to social isolation, making it imperative to reform media discourse to embrace gender diversity and move away from justifying hate. Instead, the media should work toward fostering the acceptance of diversity as a natural and humane aspect of society.

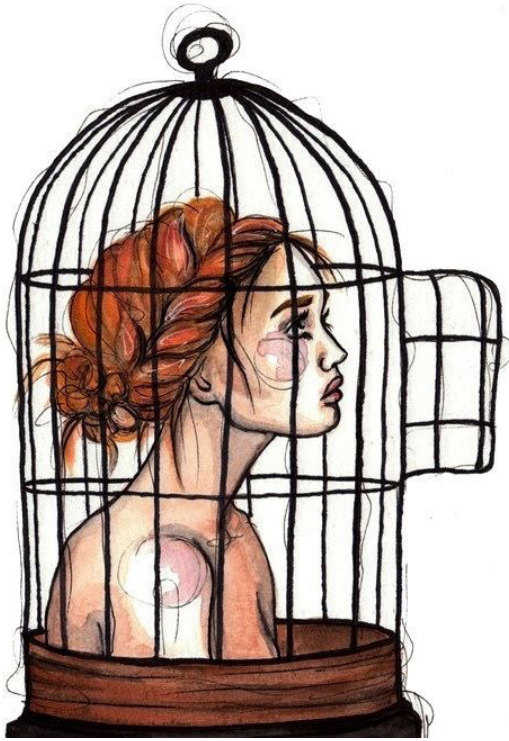


The Normalization of Violence and Harassment in Media

Hate speech contributes to the normalization of harassment by justifying abusive behaviors and portraying them as harmless jokes or trivial matters, thereby minimizing their perceived seriousness in collective consciousness. It also shifts blame onto victims, reinforces stereotypes that excuse violence against women, and weakens anti-harassment legislation by fostering doubt about victims' credibility. This environment encourages impunity, making harassment socially acceptable, increasing women's exposure to violence, and undermining efforts to combat it.

As documented in this report, a sports program aired on Tunisna T on October 2024 ,21, featured offensive remarks and comments about a female football referee's image. The comments ranged from "We're saving the refereeing committee her salary—I'll go to the bank and pay her myself," to "We agreed I'd be an assistant referee, but not on the field," and "I like how she looks; we need more like her in Tunisia so the audience can watch her instead of the game."

This discourse demonstrates a clear normalization of verbal harassment against women in sports, as popular culture continues to reduce women to their appearance, granting others the perceived right to comment on their bodies regardless of their professional roles. This rhetoric is a direct affront to women's dignity and a demeaning attack on their presence in the sports industry. Additionally, it perpetuates the tolerance of harassment and fosters an environment where such behavior is excused—even in public spaces.



Undermining and Marginalizing Women's Roles

Hate speech is often used to question women's competence and their presence in leadership positions, particularly in fields traditionally considered "exclusive to men." This pattern has been observed in multiple television programs analyzed in this report.

For instance, in S. W's remark about a man playing a female role in theater, he stated: "Where's your masculinity if you're playing a woman's role on stage?" Such statements reinforce

the idea that certain roles or professions should be restricted to one gender, whether in arts, sciences, sports, or leadership positions. This rhetoric not only undermines women's value in professional settings but also weakens their self-confidence, making them feel they must work twice as hard to prove their competence compared to their male counterparts.

The impact of this discourse extends beyond the present; it also affects future generations of girls who may internalize these messages and hesitate to pursue ambitions or careers perceived as "male-dominated." As a result, such narratives contribute to the underrepresentation of women in sectors that require greater diversity and inclusion, further discouraging their participation in leadership roles and political engagement. Questioning women's capabilities in this way is not limited to media discourse; it also reinforces institutional discrimination. These stereotypes infiltrate workplace policies and procedures, leading to biased hiring practices, promotion disparities, and unequal performance evaluations. When women are perceived as less competent or unfit for leadership, they are denied opportunities for professional advancement and full participation in their chosen fields.

For example, Maya's remark on The Big Show about women's success on TikTok downplayed their achievements and reflected a broader tendency to trivialize any field associated with women. This rhetoric becomes even more harmful when it comes from a woman who internalizes and perpetuates misogynistic narratives, highlighting how deeply ingrained societal biases continue to reproduce these views in Tunisian society, even as some groups begin to challenge them.

Moreover, women are frequently portrayed as overly emotional and incapable of making rational or practical decisions. This stereotype was reinforced in several televised discussions. For

instance, in one of her televised remarks, Sahar Louati stated that prioritizing one's appearance is a "disorder," reinforcing the stereotype that women are superficial and unfit to make logical, independent decisions.

Ultimately, such statements do nothing but weaken women's image in society and solidify rhetoric that marginalizes their role. This negatively affects their professional and social trajectory, limiting their opportunities for independence and full participation in public life.

The Impact of Hate Speech on Women

Hate speech produces harmful effects that span multiple levels. While this report attempts to categorize and identify these impacts, it is important to acknowledge that many aspects remain invisible or difficult to define.⁵ The consequences of this discourse can be grouped into three main areas, though these do not represent the full scope of its effects, as many dimensions require further examination and analysis.

In Tunisian media, hate speech against women has serious psychological repercussions, particularly affecting mental and emotional well-being. This type of discourse often leads to anxiety, depression, social isolation, and diminished self-esteem. It also reinforces patriarchal and male-dominated power structures, compelling some women to internalize these narratives in an attempt to gain societal approval.

Repeated attacks create a pervasive sense of fear among women, discouraging them from engaging in public spaces. As verbal harassment and online threats increase, many

5 Interview with human rights activist Mariam (pseudonym for her safety and security).

women resort to self-censorship, restricting their freedom of expression. Women's behavior and actions are constantly scrutinized and judged, leading to public shaming and verbal abuse in live broadcasts, often under the guise of humor. These images and videos are frequently shared online with sensationalist titles like "Scandal", disproportionately focusing on the woman's name or role, whereas male participants rarely face similar treatment.

The psychological distress and confusion caused by such treatment are evident on women's faces during televised programs, especially when they are directly targeted or subjected to humiliating remarks. This is particularly noticeable in talk shows, where women, as guests, often find themselves trapped in discussions that revolve around their personal lives, forcing them to justify or defend themselves against preconceived judgments.

This persistent targeting is routinely dismissed or downplayed. Many women feel compelled to participate in these programs at the cost of exploiting their own struggles, as they are pressured into making provocative statements to attract public attention. Several women working in the media industry have reported experiencing pressure from production teams, coercing them into engaging in these dynamics.

The effects of hate speech are not limited to moments of direct attack but extend into women's daily lives, fostering chronic anxiety. Many live in a constant state of tension, anticipating threats or abuse at any moment. This heightened sense of vulnerability makes them more cautious in expressing their views or participating in public forums—both online and offline—for fear of digital attacks that could damage their reputations or personal safety.

Over time, these cumulative effects escalate, leading to severe psychological disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Social Consequences of Hate Speech

Hate speech has profound social repercussions, as it fosters an unwelcoming environment for women and reinforces stereotypes that diminish their roles within society, making their participation in public spaces increasingly difficult. One of the most significant consequences of this discourse is the restriction of women's freedom of expression. Many women fear harassment or threats when engaging in public debates, whether through traditional media or social media platforms. As a result, self-censorship becomes widespread, limiting women's participation in societal issues and weakening their voices in advocating for their rights and defending their needs.

Additionally, hate speech demonizes women's rights defenders, further marginalizing them in both media and social spaces. The media often perpetuates traditional stereotypes that associate a woman's worth with concepts of honor and chastity, reinforcing restrictive social norms, particularly in more conservative environments.

One of the most alarming consequences of this discourse is the increase in violence against women, as it normalizes and legitimizes such violence, making it socially acceptable. The media often treats women's issues with mockery and trivialization, whether by ridiculing their demands or using violence against them as comedic material. This approach deepens their suffering and perpetuates these harmful phenomena in public spaces. Many journalists and media professionals exhibit negligence

toward these issues, disregarding journalistic ethics, which contributes to the misinformation of public opinion, reinforces discriminatory narratives, and undermines efforts to achieve gender equality.

According to Aswat Nisaa⁶, a Tunisian women's rights organization, several factors contribute to the rising rate of femicides and violence against women, including:

Normalization of gender-based violence: Societal attitudes often tolerate violence against women, making it somewhat acceptable in certain communities.

Traditional upbringing: Social norms prioritize family over the individual, encouraging women to sacrifice their well-being for their families and children, making them more vulnerable to accepting violence.

Impunity: Delays in legal proceedings for gender-based violence cases lead perpetrators to believe they can act without consequences, encouraging repeated offenses.

Socioeconomic conditions: Deteriorating financial and social conditions increase tensions in family relationships, raising the likelihood of domestic violence and, in extreme cases, femicide.

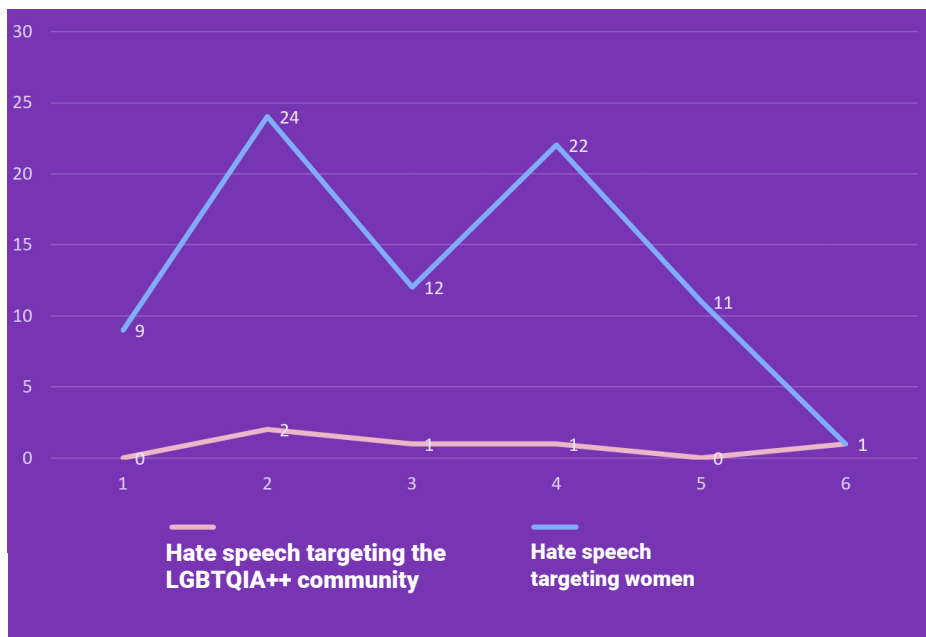
Drug abuse: The widespread consumption of narcotics and other substances has exacerbated the intensity of violence, as these substances impair judgment and fuel aggression in domestic conflicts.

6 Al Araby Alaam, 2024, "Violence Against Women in Tunisia: Between Hate Speech and Impunity," August 30, last accessed: 09.10.2024
https://www.alarabyalaan.com/2024/08/blog-post_33.html

Distribution of Hate Speech by Programs and Channels

Numberina of the media proarams that were analvzed	Program number 1	Program number 2	Program number3	Program number 4	Program number 5	Program number6
Number of episodes for each media proaramme	16	26	37	28	27	2
Proaram aualitv	Entertaining	Entertaining	Entertaining	Entertaining	Entertaining	political
Number of episodes of each TV show that contained offensive statements	9	24	12	22	11	1
Gender-based hate speech	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Speech incitina violence against certain aroups	no	yes	no	yes	no	yes

This chart explains the prevalence of hate speech in the media programmes that were adopted as a sample to analyse hate speech and its prevalence in the media.



A Chart Categorizing Hate Speech Based on Targeted Groups According to the Media Programs Monitored in the Report⁷

⁷ Intersection Association's Database for Hate Speech Analysis in Tunisia

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1WEJYlaPOuo_b5bAt1qT-wQI7UNpo9cF4JY0xoLiCWeA/edit?gid=1086053580#gid=1086053580



Hate Speech on Social Media and Digital Spaces

Hate speech on social media, particularly against women and the LGBTQIA++ community, has become an alarming and growing phenomenon that threatens their safety, well-being, and full inclusion in society.

For women, this discourse manifests in incitement to violence, the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes, the undermining of their status, and the violation of their privacy. In the case of the LGBTQIA++ community, hate speech targets their identities and sexualities, taking the form of discrimination, social exclusion, incitement to hatred, and even threats of violence.

The fast-paced dissemination of content and the anonymity provided by digital platforms facilitate the spread of such rhetoric, making it even harder to hold perpetrators accountable. This pervasive and dangerous phenomenon, given its devastating impact on both individuals and society, requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders—including social media platforms, government institutions, and civil society organizations—to put

an end to these blatant violations of human rights.

To effectively combat hate speech in digital spaces, it is essential to enforce stricter legislation and increase public awareness about the consequences of online harassment and discrimination.

Legal Implications

When addressing the phenomenon of hate speech in the digital sphere, it becomes evident that Tunisian legislation lacks clear and specific provisions that explicitly criminalize such speech directed at women, whether on social media platforms or in traditional media. This legislative gap complicates the process of prosecuting these crimes, weakens victims' ability to seek justice and redress, and contributes to the impunity of perpetrators. Consequently, this exacerbates the spread of hate speech, intensifies its harmful effects on women, and increases their sense of marginalization and lack of protection. The legal gap presents a significant barrier to ensuring women's protection from hate speech in the digital space. Although legal provisions such as Law No. 58 exist to provide protection, they are unfortunately not effectively enforced, according to testimonies from multiple activists. Furthermore, despite the presence of clear definitions of hate speech in international treaties and national legislation, the Tunisian state continues to resist categorizing violence against women as gender-based violence. This contradiction between the existence of laws and their lack of implementation renders legal texts ineffective, ultimately turning them into tools that serve political power rather than victims. While these laws are justified as necessary for limiting hate speech and maintaining social stability, in practice, they are often used to restrict freedom of expression. Thus, the issue is not only the lack of strong legal provisions but

also, more importantly, the absence of political will to implement them effectively and fairly, leading to the continued cycle of impunity and deepening women's suffering.

Additionally, proving these crimes is particularly difficult, even with specialized units in place. Legal proceedings require extensive follow-up efforts, and the associated legal processes impose financial burdens that not all women can afford. Trans women, in particular, face additional barriers to accessing justice, as filing complaints is challenging due to the criminalization of their gender expression under Tunisian law. Courts often rely on vague and legally unfounded concepts, such as "public morals," to justify discrimination against them. These circumstances increase their vulnerability to hate speech and weaken their ability to defend themselves and obtain justice.

Hate speech on social media poses a serious legal challenge in Tunisia, as it threatens fundamental rights and freedoms, particularly those of women and marginalized groups. Despite the presence of legal provisions intended to curb this phenomenon, their enforcement remains weak, allowing hate speech to continue spreading and negatively impacting individuals and society as a whole.

For instance, Tunisian law addresses hate speech through various legal texts, most notably Article 52 of Decree No. 115 of 2011 on press freedom, which criminalizes incitement to violence or hatred against individuals or groups. Additionally, Law No. 9 of 2019, which aims to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination, can be partially applied to certain forms of hate speech, particularly those targeting minorities. Article 86 of the Telecommunications Code also criminalizes harming others through public communication networks. However, this article is primarily used in political cases rather than being effectively applied to hate speech more broadly.

Despite the availability of these legal frameworks, Tunisia faces several challenges in enforcing them effectively. Weak monitoring and enforcement mechanisms hinder the detection and prosecution of hate speech on digital platforms. Legal ambiguity leaves the definition of hate speech open to conflicting interpretations, making it difficult to apply the law consistently. Furthermore, the politicization of legal cases has led to the use of hate speech laws as tools for political score-settling and silencing opposition voices, undermining the credibility of legal measures. Additionally, victims suffer from a lack of protection mechanisms, as no clear policies exist to support individuals targeted by hate speech, leaving them vulnerable to societal stigma without adequate legal safeguards.

Impact of Hate Speech on the LGBTQIA++ Community

Social Consequences

Hate speech targeting the LGBTQIA++ community in Tunisia has profound and complex social effects, as it directly contributes to creating a hostile environment that encourages both physical and psychological violence. Within this charged atmosphere, members of this community face physical assaults, including harassment, direct attacks, and death threats, which heighten their sense of fear and endanger their daily safety.

Violence is not limited to physical attacks but also manifests as psychological violence in the form of social rejection and exclusion. This has a detrimental impact on individuals' mental health, undermining their self-esteem and increasing rates of anxiety and depression among them.

As a result of this ongoing pressure, many LGBTQIA++ individuals are forced to conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity, restricting their personal freedoms and affecting their social and professional lives. This further deepens their isolation within society. The fear of rejection or violence, even within their own families, often leads them to live in a constant state of anxiety, exacerbating their sense of marginalization and exposing them to continuous oppression and discrimination.

Hate speech also weakens social cohesion and deepens societal divisions by fueling rejection of diversity. This leads to the loss of opportunities for dialogue and understanding, transforming society into a space of tension and conflict. Moreover, this discourse reinforces the false notion that the

LGBTQIA++ community poses a threat to cultural and societal values, further isolating them and depriving them of economic and educational opportunities while hindering their active participation in society.

Beyond its direct harm to the LGBTQIA++ community, hate speech threatens the cohesion of society as a whole, making peaceful coexistence an increasingly difficult goal. It also obstructs any reform efforts aimed at promoting a culture of human rights, inclusivity, and equality in Tunisia. Furthermore, it complicates efforts to advance legislation and policies that would protect the rights and dignity of all individuals.

In this charged climate, LGBTQIA++ voices are silenced, making it difficult for them to express themselves and advocate for their rights. The impact of hate speech is not limited to the present; it extends to future generations, reinforcing harmful prejudices and deepening the divide between LGBTQIA++ individuals and the rest of society.

It is crucial to reaffirm that sexual orientation and gender expression are fundamental human rights, as recognized by numerous international treaties. These identities are not abnormalities or disorders. LGBTQIA++ individuals have the right to live and enjoy all the rights and services provided by the state on an equal footing with all other citizens.



Psychological Impact

Members of the LGBTQIA++ community in Tunisia endure severe psychological distress due to social discrimination and family rejection, often driven by the fear of social stigma that could tarnish the family's reputation. In Tunisian society, family honor remains a dominant concern, and having an LGBTQIA++ family member is frequently perceived as a source of disgrace. In a testimony given to Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms, activist Adam⁸ described how hate speech reinforces social fragility, affecting family relationships, community interactions, and individuals' treatment by the state. He emphasized that the legal framework criminalizing sexual orientation and disregarding gender identities, coupled with repressive practices and degrading treatment, exacerbates the suffering of LGBTQIA++ individuals. Adam also pointed out that

8 Interview with Queer Activist Adam

hate speech and incitement to violence are not confined to social media influencers—they are also manifested in everyday life, through harassment and attacks in public spaces, which are then amplified and reproduced by the media.

Family rejection is a major psychological burden for LGBTQIA++ individuals, leading to feelings of insecurity and alienation within their own homes. The lack of emotional support leaves many isolated and vulnerable, while criminalization laws make it even harder for them to access adequate healthcare and mental health support, particularly during critical stages of self-discovery and coming out.

The absence of inclusive educational curricula further entrenches misconceptions about gender and sexuality, intensifying internalized fear and self-censorship among LGBTQIA++ individuals. This fear is especially pronounced in rural and marginalized regions, where deviation from traditional gender norms is viewed as shameful, exposing individuals to social stigma and various forms of violence.

Societal and street harassment compound these psychological burdens, forcing LGBTQIA++ individuals to hide their identities and avoid public spaces for fear of verbal or physical attacks. This chronic fear and isolation can escalate into severe anxiety, depression, and, in extreme cases, suicidal ideation.

Many LGBTQIA++ individuals report that psychological and emotional abuse extends beyond social interactions to educational and medical institutions, where they are denied safe learning environments and non-discriminatory healthcare services. This institutional exclusion deepens their marginalization, making it even harder for them to participate in society and establish stable lives.

The constant threat to their safety prevents many LGBTQIA++

individuals from seeking police protection or legal assistance when faced with injustices. Instead, they are often forced to turn to human rights organizations and activists for support. This lack of institutional protection exposes them to further violence and stigma. Their personal information is frequently leaked or misused, making them targets of online hate speech and real-life harassment. As a result, they are denied their right to privacy and autonomy, forced to navigate between invisibility and hyper-visibility, both of which put them at risk of exclusion, humiliation, and violence.

Legal Implications

The forced practice of anal examinations has resurfaced in Tunisia after years of abandonment, signaling a dangerous escalation in the legal and security crackdown against the LGBTQIA++ community. Since October 2024, there has been a notable intensification of state-led campaigns targeting the fundamental freedoms and existence of this community. This campaign has involved a series of arbitrary arrests and swift trials based on Article 230 of the Penal Code and other so-called "moral" provisions, reminiscent of medieval inquisitions. A ruling by the First Instance Court of Kef sentenced two LGBTQIA++ individuals to one year in prison after they were forcibly subjected to anal examinations, a blatant violation of human rights and international standards. The crackdown has also targeted queer content creators, such as the case of Khabib, who was subjected to mistreatment and torture and sentenced to four and a half years in prison under Articles 226 and 226 bis of the Penal Code. These two provisions are outdated and excessively restrictive of freedoms, raising concerns about their compatibility with the principle of public security, as they appear to be used primarily to suppress public and personal freedoms.

The campaign extended beyond arrests to include home raids, phone confiscations and intrusions,⁹ and digital surveillance through hacking dating apps and social media platforms to entrap and blackmail individuals. Efforts were also made to obstruct the work of legal defense committees, aiming to paralyze lawyers' ability to defend detainees. Law enforcement officers have been impersonating queer individuals on dating apps—often the only space available for LGBTQIA++ Tunisians to express their sexual freedom—to lure, entrap, and subsequently prosecute them as criminals under Article 230 of the Penal Code. This legal provision criminalizes same-sex relationships and permits violations of bodily integrity, subjecting LGBTQIA++ individuals to social stigma and endangering their lives in a society that has yet to accept their right to full citizenship. Additionally, in many cases, authorities and individuals exploit and blackmail LGBTQIA++ individuals using their personal data and private photos.

These violations represent a significant regression from Tunisia's commitments before the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2023, where it pledged to eliminate discriminatory practices and protect gender identities and sexual orientations. Yet, the escalation of these abuses highlights the state's role in institutionalizing discrimination, leveraging the rhetoric of "public morality" to justify repression. This constitutes a breach of several international treaties, most notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which forms the foundation of international human rights law. Article 1 of the declaration states that "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity

9 Human Rights Watch, 2023, "All This Terror Because of a Photo: Digital Targeting and Its Offline Consequences for LGBT People in the Middle East and North Africa," last accessed: 17/01/2025.
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/02/21/all-terror-because-photo/digital-targeting-and-its-offline-consequences-lgbt>

and rights," while Article 2 affirms that everyone is entitled to these rights without discrimination, including on the basis of gender identity.

Additionally, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights obligates state parties to ensure that all individuals enjoy their rights without discrimination (Article 2), while Article 7 prohibits cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Similarly, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) requires states to take measures to eradicate any form of discrimination, including against individuals facing persecution based on their gender identity.

Lastly, the Yogyakarta Principles serve as a crucial international framework affirming human rights for individuals of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. These principles call for legal recognition of gender identity and the protection of LGBTQIA++ individuals from all forms of discrimination.

Tunisia's failure to uphold these international obligations constitutes a severe human rights violation and damages its global reputation. This ongoing failure underscores the urgent need for fundamental legal reforms that fully respect the rights of all citizens, foster social peace, and improve living conditions for all. The continuation of such violations endangers the safety of LGBTQIA++ individuals and contributes to an environment of insecurity for them.

Conclusion

This report highlights the profound impact of hate speech targeting women and the LGBTQIA++ community in traditional media, as well as its widespread presence on social media and digital platforms. Hate speech extends beyond verbal abuse; it becomes a tool that entrenches discrimination, deepens social divisions, and promotes systemic violence against marginalized groups.

Despite Tunisia's progress in the realm of rights and freedoms, this discourse remains a major obstacle to achieving true equality. It negatively affects individuals' mental health and weakens social cohesion. The continued proliferation of hate speech without effective accountability reflects the fragility of the legal framework for combating discrimination and raises questions about the state's commitment to addressing violence. Additionally, the absence of strict regulatory mechanisms to ensure media compliance with ethical standards allows this discourse to persist unchecked.

Furthermore, the lack of public awareness about the dangers of hate speech normalizes and reinforces it within the public sphere, leading to further marginalization and exclusion. Combating hate speech is not an individual responsibility but rather a collective challenge that requires the combined efforts of all stakeholders—including the state, media, and civil society—to build a more just and inclusive public space founded on the principles of human rights, equality, and dignity for all.

Recommendations

Based on the violations documented in this report regarding the widespread presence of hate speech in Tunisian media and social media, particularly targeting women and the LGBTQIA++ community, Intersection Association for Rights and Freedoms presents the following recommendations:

To the Tunisian State:

Legislative Reforms: Enact clear and explicit legislation that criminalizes hate speech against women and the LGBTQIA++ community both online and in the media, in accordance with international human rights standards.

Training for Judicial and Law Enforcement Authorities: Implement specialized training programs for judges and law enforcement officers on identifying online hate speech, collecting digital evidence, and prosecuting cybercrimes related to hate speech.

Recognizing Hate Speech as Gender-Based Violence: Officially classify hate speech as a form of gender-based violence and put an end to incitement against civil society organizations advocating for LGBTQIA++ rights.

Establishing Effective Reporting Mechanisms: Facilitate the process of reporting hate speech cases online, ensuring the confidentiality and protection of whistleblowers from retaliation.

Supporting Media Oversight Bodies: Strengthen institutions responsible for media content regulation, particularly the Haute Autorité Indépendante de la Communication Audiovisuelle (HAICA), to enforce accountability in cases of hate speech.

To Civil Society Organizations:

Monitoring and Documentation: Systematically track and document cases of hate speech against women and the LGBTQIA++ community online, publishing periodic reports to raise awareness and advocate for accountability.

Advocacy and Policy Change: Pressure the government to adopt effective anti-hate speech legislation and launch awareness campaigns aimed at changing discriminatory narratives in society.

Empowering Affected Communities: Enhance the ability of women and LGBTQIA++ individuals to protect themselves from online hate speech and equip them with legal tools to defend their rights.

Strengthening Collaboration: Foster greater coordination among human rights organizations to amplify the impact of efforts to combat hate speech.

To the International Community:

Encouraging Legal and Policy Reforms: Urge the Tunisian state to reform its laws and policies to better combat hate speech in the digital space.

Providing Financial and Technical Support: Offer funding and resources to support civil society initiatives aimed at countering hate speech and protecting women and LGBTQIA++ individuals.

Promoting International Cooperation: Facilitate the exchange of expertise and best practices in combating hate speech on a global level.

Monitoring Human Rights Violations: Keep track of human rights conditions in Tunisia, particularly in relation to hate speech against women and the LGBTQIA++ community, and publish periodic reports on developments.

Annex:

Key Concepts

Hate Speech:¹⁰

According to UNICEF, hate speech can be described as any form of communication (whether verbal, written, or behavioral) that attacks or discriminates against a person or group based on identity factors such as religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, ancestry, disability, age, gender, or sexual orientation. Hate speech may also target additional "identity factors," such as language, economic or social origin, or health status. Hate speech is not limited to words alone.

Hate speech can occur in person or online and can be expressed through various means, including images, cartoons, games, videos, objects, gestures, or symbols. The United Nations¹¹ defines hate speech as offensive speech directed at a group or individual based on inherent characteristics (such as race,

10 UNICEF, How to Talk to Your Children About Hate Speech, last accessed: 15/01/2025

<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/ar/%D9%83%D9%8A%D9%81-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%AB-%D8%A3%D8%B7%D9%81%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%A9>

11 United Nations, The Secretary-General's Message on Hate Speech, last accessed: 10/01/2025

<https://www.un.org/ar/observances/countering-hate-speech#:~:text=%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%A9%20%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%B3%20%D9%81%D9%82%D8%B7%20%D8%A5%D9%86%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8B%D8%A7,%D9%84%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8%20%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%A9%20%D8%B9%D9%86%D8%AF%20%D9%83%D9%84%20%D9%85%D9%86%D8%B9%D8%B7%D9%81>

religion, or gender identity), which may threaten social peace. There is no universally accepted legal definition of hate speech under international human rights law. The concept remains widely contested, particularly in relation to freedom of opinion, expression, non-discrimination, and equality. To establish a unified framework for addressing hate speech globally, the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech defines it as "any kind of communication, whether oral, written, or behavioral, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or group based on their identity." This includes identity markers such as religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, ancestry, gender, or other specified identity traits. Key characteristics of hate speech, according to this definition, include:

1/ Hate speech can be transmitted through any form of expression, including images, cartoons, memes, objects, gestures, and symbols, and can be disseminated online or offline.

2/ Hate speech is either "discriminatory" (biased, prejudiced, intolerant) or "derogatory" (contemptuous, offensive, humiliating) towards an individual or group.

3/ Hate speech targets both actual and perceived "identity factors," which include religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, ancestry, or gender, as well as characteristics such as language, economic or social background, disability, health status, or sexual orientation, among others.

Law No. 58¹² of 2017, aimed at eliminating violence against

12 Fundamental Law No. 58 of 2017 dated August 11, 2017, on the Elimination of Violence Against Women

women, was a result of persistent efforts by feminist activists and human rights organizations to raise awareness about issues of violence and marginalization, including:

Violence Against Women: Any physical, psychological, sexual, or economic assault against women based on gender discrimination, causing harm, pain, or damage—whether physical, psychological, sexual, or economic. This also includes threats of violence, coercion, deprivation of rights and freedoms, both in public and private life.

Psychological Violence: Defined within Law No. 58 of 2017 as any verbal assault such as slander, insults, coercion, threats, neglect, deprivation of rights and freedoms, humiliation, mockery, or other actions that violate the dignity of women or seek to control or intimidate them. In a broader sense, psychological violence includes emotional abuse, manipulation, and social isolation, significantly impacting victims' mental well-being. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence is defined as "the use of force or power against another person, resulting in physical or psychological harm."

Digital Violence: A growing form of abuse carried out through technological means, encompassing a range of harmful behaviors executed via the internet or smartphones. This includes cyber harassment, where perpetrators send offensive messages or threats via email or social media; cyberbullying, which involves spreading rumors or public insults to cause emotional distress; and extortion, where sensitive information or private images are used to coerce victims. Digital violence is particularly dangerous as it allows for continuous abuse without physical proximity, exacerbating anxiety and depression among victims. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)

defines digital violence as "forms of technology-based violence that exploit the internet or communication tools to cause harm, including harassment, threats, or the dissemination of illegal content."

Gendered Social Roles (Care Roles):

Refers to the social and economic roles traditionally assigned to women regarding caregiving and support for others, whether within the family or the community. These roles include caring for children, the elderly, the sick, and individuals with special needs, in addition to daily household responsibilities. Traditionally, caregiving has been considered "women's work" and is often unpaid or undervalued in formal economic systems. The International Labour Organization (ILO)¹³ recognizes that unpaid care work is essential to economies but is largely overlooked or undervalued. Women perform the vast majority of this labor, reinforcing gender-based inequalities. These roles act as a barrier to women's full participation in economic, social, and political life. Feminist movements across various ideological schools advocate for the reevaluation of care work and for a more equitable distribution of these responsibilities between genders.

LGBTQIA++ Community and Related Concepts:

To fully understand the term LGBTQIA++, it is essential to distinguish between several interrelated concepts: gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender expression. Gender: A term that emerged centuries ago, referring to the bodily, linguistic, and cultural roles assigned to men and women based on social, economic, historical, and political factors. The WHO defines gender as the roles and opportunities society

¹³ International Labour Organization (ILO) Website: <https://www.ilo.org/ar/media/365291/download>

assigns to males and females, which vary across societies and historical periods.

Sexual Orientation: The emotional and sexual attraction a person feels toward others and their preference in choosing partners. In Tunisia, non-heteronormative sexual orientations are criminalized under Article 230 of the Penal Code, which dates back to colonial-era laws. WHO¹⁴ defines sexual orientation as "a pattern of enduring emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to individuals of a particular gender." Sexual orientation is an intrinsic part of individual identity and does not require treatment or change.

Gender Identity: A deeply personal experience that determines how an individual perceives their gender. It may or may not align with their assigned sex at birth. Challenging or denying a person's gender identity is a form of violence and hate speech.

Gender Expression: The external representation of an individual's gender identity through actions, appearance, clothing, speech, and behavior. Gender expression may align with societal expectations or deviate from them.

LGBTQ2IA+ (2SLGBTQIA++)¹⁵: This acronym, used by the Canadian government, recognizes diverse sexual and gender identities and includes:

2S (Two-Spirit): Indigenous North American individuals who

¹⁴ World Health Organization, Gender and Health, last accessed: 10/01/2025

<https://www.emro.who.int/ar/gender/infocus/gender-health-test.html>

¹⁵

Government of Canada, 2SLGBTQI+ Terminology – Glossary and Common Acronyms, last accessed: 10/01/2025

<https://www.canada.ca/en/women-gender-equality/free-to-be-me/2slgbtqi-plus-glossary.html>

embody both masculine and feminine traits.

L (Lesbian): Women who are attracted to women.

G (Gay): Men who are attracted to men.

B (Bisexual): Individuals attracted to both men and women.

T (Transgender): People whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth.

Q (Queer): A broad term for individuals who do not conform to traditional gender or sexual orientation classifications.

I (Intersex): Individuals born with sexual characteristics that do not fit typical binary definitions of male or female.

+: Represents additional identities not explicitly covered in the acronym.

The Canadian government places "2S" (Two-Spirit) at the forefront of the 2SLGBTQIA++ acronym to acknowledge the historical and cultural role of Two-Spirit individuals in Indigenous communities. These individuals have long been recognized as part of the first sexually and gender-diverse communities in Canada.

Gender Expression:¹⁶ Refers to how individuals externally present their gender identity through actions, appearance, clothing, speech, or even hairstyle. For many, their gender expression aligns with societal expectations of their assigned sex, while for others, it does not. Gender expression may differ from a person's gender identity, sexual orientation, or biological characteristics.

Feminism¹⁷

Feminism is a social movement dedicated to advocating for women's rights and advancing gender equality in cultural,

16 United Nations Free & Equal, Definitions and Human Rights Concepts, last accessed: 10/01/2025

<https://www.unfe.org/ar/es/know-the-facts/definitions>

social, economic, and political spheres. It opposes all forms of discrimination and exclusion. Feminism first emerged in the Western world in the 19th century, influenced by political and social changes in Europe during the late 18th century, particularly the Enlightenment and the French Revolution of 1789. Although the revolution itself did not directly address women's rights, it paved the way for feminist demands for equality.

With the rise of socialism in Europe and the abolition of slavery in the United States, feminism gained momentum and expanded beyond the Western world. In the Arab world, feminist movements began to emerge in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but gained significant traction in the 1980s.

Feminism has evolved into multiple waves, each broadening its scope to include more marginalized women. Initially dominated by liberal, radical, and socialist schools of thought, contemporary feminism now embraces intersectionality, one of the most influential frameworks in modern feminist activism. Intersectional feminism is not a "school" in the traditional sense but rather an analytical approach to understanding how multiple systems of oppression interact and affect individuals, particularly women. Earlier feminist movements often focused primarily on white, middle-class women's issues, whereas intersectional feminism expands its scope to consider various forms of discrimination, including racial, class-based, ethnic, religious, and gender-based oppression. It serves as a comprehensive method for analyzing human experiences, making it a widely adopted framework in contemporary feminist discourse.

Legal Framework on Hate Speech

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
 The Yogyakarta Principles
 The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
 The Rabat Plan of Action
 The European Convention on Human Rights
 The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action
 The Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (2011), alongside budget provisions for implementing Tunisia's Law No. 58 of 2017
 The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 190 (2019) on the elimination of violence and harassment in the workplace
 The UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech
 Tunisia's Penal Code (Articles 128, 121, 52)
 The 2015 Anti-Terrorism and Money Laundering Law (Articles 37, 14)
 The 2018 Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Articles 9, 2)
 The 2011 Decree No. 115 on Press, Printing, and Publishing
 The 2011 Decree No. 116 on the Regulation of Audiovisual Communication and the Creation of the Independent High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA)
 Law No. 58 of 2017 on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
 Law No. 151 of 1975 on Press Freedom (Articles 54, 50, 5, 1)

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