

Toward a more Tolerant Society:

Mechanisms Against Hate Speech and Intolerance

Gaza as a Model in the Context of War



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Project:

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1. Introduction

In times of wars and disasters, the effects of destruction are not limited to material and human losses, but extend to the moral and social structure of society, generating new forms of tensions, intensifying latent negative tendencies, and inciting divisions that may remain for decades after the ceasefire. Hate speech and intolerance are among the most prominent threats to the Palestinian social fabric in times of crisis, and their presence has escalated sharply during the ongoing Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. In the face of widespread destruction, legal vacuum, mass displacement, insecurity, exclusion, and symbolic and moral violence, hate speech feeds on feelings of anger and despair, and finds fertile ground in a socially and politically exhausted environment. The danger of such rhetoric stems from the fact that it not only expresses temporary tension, but also reproduces structural divisions and deepens societal fissures along familial, regional, or political lines.

In the Palestinian context, hate speech cannot be separated from the general structure of the long conflict, whether with the occupation or internally between the components of society. Palestinians themselves, despite their collective suffering, have for years been facing increasing challenges related to weak social cohesion, the division of political authority, and the erosion of trust between citizens and their institutions. As the war on Gaza intensified and the humanitarian tragedy intensified, discourses of accusation, betrayal, and exclusion emerged, whether on the basis of political affiliation¹, family origins, geography (between those displaced from the north and those settled in the south), or even economic and social status, revealing an underlying crisis in the cultural and social structure that goes beyond the impact of the war itself.

Gaza was chosen as a model for this paper, not only because it is the direct frontline with the occupation, but also because it has become a complex case of crises: An unprecedented internal displacement that has turned the social fabric into overlapping fragments; a deep-rooted political division that has heightened tensions between factions and their followers; and a near total collapse of services and infrastructure that has increased daily pressures on individuals and families, creating a fertile environment for discourses of blame, exclusion, and hatred. Gaza today faces not only external bombardment, but also an internal rift that manifests itself in the horizontal relations between the components of society, which threatens the common foundations on which the national identity was built.

In this context, this paper considers hate speech as any overt or implicit expression that involves incitement, contempt, discrimination or betrayal on the basis of political, geographical, social or gender affiliation, while intolerance is understood as the rejection of pluralism and the legitimacy of the different other and insistence on a single interpretation of identity and belonging. While intolerance is understood as the rejection

¹ United Nations Human Rights Council. Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Expert Workshops on the Prohibition of Incitement to National, Racial or Religious Hatred. Twenty-Second Session, Agenda Item 2. Annual Report of the High Commissioner and Reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General united nations available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/policy-and-methodological-publications/rabat-plan-action>

of pluralism and the legitimacy of the different other and the insistence on a single interpretation of identity and belonging, and this may manifest itself in verbal or practical behaviours aimed at exclusion, isolation or discrimination². When the two concepts intersect in wartime, they become tools for dismantling the social fabric and redrawing lines of contact internally.

According to these concepts, the paper aims to analyse the roots of this growing discourse, and explore its patterns that were triggered by the war, such as political, geographical, and class discrimination. Finally, it seeks to present a practical vision for confronting it through education, media and civil society to rebuild trust and social relations.

2. General context: War and Division as Catalysts of Hate

Hate speech in Gaza was not spontaneous; rather, the war revealed latent social and political roots and reproduced them in harsher and more complex contexts. This discourse escalated through three main mechanisms that shaped its most prominent features:

a) War Pressure and Societal Fractures

The ongoing Israeli war on the Gaza Strip has been one of the most devastating humanitarian disasters for the Palestinian social fabric, resulting in the forced displacement of more than 1.9 million people, equivalent to more than 90% of the Gaza Strip's population, according to reports by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)³. This unprecedented displacement not only resulted in the loss of housing or resources, but also created a state of acute collective trauma that shook the structure of traditional social relations and reshaped them in coercive and disruptive circumstances. People who had been living in relatively stable living conditions suddenly found themselves forced to move to overcrowded and temporary spaces such as schools, shelter camps, or the homes of relatives and friends, often without minimal privacy, food or psychological security. UNRWA data indicates that more than 330 schools have been reassigned as emergency shelters, while the capacity of each school does not exceed 500 people, meaning a total capacity of 165,000 people. However, these centres have been used more than ten times their capacity, leading to severe overcrowding and a sharp deterioration in health and humanitarian conditions, and contributing to growing feelings of distress, congestion, and a loss of a sense of security and stability⁴.

These exceptional circumstances have contributed to generating mutual social tensions between the displaced and host communities. Residents of the host areas have

² UNESCO. Declaration of Principles on Tolerance. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1995

<https://www.oas.org/dil/1995%20Declaration%20of%20Principles%20on%20Tolerance%20UNESCO.pdf>

³ united nations office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs(OCHA).Humanitarian Update#275-Gaza Strip-2025.available at: HTTPs Reported Impact Snapshot IGAZA STRIPIGaza_Reported_Impact_Snapshot_07_August_2024 final

⁴ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Palestine: The Humanitarian Impact of the Israeli Conflict. 2024.

Available at: <https://www.ochaopt.org>

(UNRWA) Emergency Response Report on the Gaza Crisis. 2024. Available at: <https://www.unrwa.org>

expressed their dissatisfaction with the pressure on basic services and the scarcity of resources, especially in light of the collapse of infrastructure and the decline of health and education services by nearly 60%, according to the Palestinian Ministry of Health (2024). On the other hand, IDPs feel marginalized and even symbolically excluded, as their suffering is sometimes portrayed as a burden on the “people of the south” or those who remain in temporary displacement sites, creating a sense of societal rejection and psychological separation.

These tensions have manifested themselves in mutual hate speech in the form of collective blame, regional stereotyping, or accusations of laziness, selfishness, or negligence in taking responsibility for “steadfastness.” More seriously, these discourses did not remain confined to daily experience, but began to take on a structural character that intersects with geography, class and social affiliation: “displaced from the north” versus ‘resident in the south,’ ‘affected’ versus ‘beneficiary,’ ‘deprived’ versus ‘protected,’ in a scene that reflects symbolic fissures that threaten the collective fabric⁵.

One of the most prominent manifestations of these cracks is the collapse of traditional solidarity networks that have long served as a social safety valve in Palestinian culture, such as the extended family and neighbourly ties, whose ability to respond to collective crises during the war declined as a result of displacement, geographical separation, and communication breakdowns. Field testimonies collected by researchers from civil society organizations indicate an increase in feelings of hatred and suspicion between families and a decrease in mutual social support, especially in shelter areas, which led to the spread of isolationist and individualistic behaviours⁶.

In light of these facts, it can be said that war not only destroys civilization, but also redraws the boundaries of identity and belonging within society itself, making hostile discourse and societal discrimination a mode of coping with the crisis rather than confronting it. Therefore, it becomes necessary to analyse these dynamics as a key component in understanding hate speech, and not just as a side effect of war.

b) The Palestinian Political Divide and the Amplification of Rhetorical Polarization

The spread of hate speech in Palestinian society cannot be understood in isolation from the deep and protracted political divide that hit the structure of the political and social system since the mid-2000s, when ideological and programmatic differences between the most prominent national action factions, led by Fatah and Hamas, escalated. This institutional division contributed to the consolidation of polarization within the societal fabric and the disintegration of collective ties. Over time, this state of affairs developed

⁵ Attallah, Islam. Community Organizing during the Last War on Gaza 2023–2024: An Analytical Study. Unpublished manuscript, Arab Council for the Social Sciences, Beirut, p. 20.

⁶ Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP). Mental Health Situation After Nine Months of the Israeli War on Gaza Strip & GCMHP Emergency Response 2023/2024. Raya Media Network. Available at: <https://www.raya.ps/news/1168522.html>

into systems of mutual hatred, in which political loyalty became a criterion for social integration or a means of exclusion⁷.

With the outbreak of the recent Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, the crisis worsened instead of the humanitarian tragedy being an entry point for bridging the gap between political parties. Rather, it deepened the administrative and political rift between the West Bank and Gaza, bringing back the scene of tensions and public disagreements at the most sensitive and fragile moments. The mutual discourse was characterized by a high degree of polarization, name-calling, quarrels and hatred, which hinders any real efforts to rebuild national unity.⁸

In the digital space, this disagreement and polarization was even more fierce. Social media turned into open arenas for the escalation of hate speech, including organized campaigns of name-calling, skepticism, gloating, or blaming a particular political party for failure or suffering, while the other is celebrated as the “legitimate representative of the resistance” or “the owner of a sound national position” depending on each individual's position in the map of political loyalties. Fatah supporters accused Hamas of causing the war and holding it responsible for human suffering, while Hamas’s supporters accused Fatah of failing and colluding with the occupation.

For example, in one group that might appear to support Fatah, posts were published accusing Hamas of “reckless adventurism” and “dragging the people into a pointless war,” with comments describing Hamas leaders as “traffickers in innocent blood⁹.” In contrast, other pages that appeared to support Hamas saw posts accusing Fatah of “treason” and “security coordination with the occupation.” On the other hand, other pages that appeared to support Hamas saw posts accusing Fatah of “treason” and “security coordination with the occupation,” with comments describing Fatah leaders as “agents” and “laggards¹⁰.” These disagreements were not limited to public posts, but extended to the comments, where users exchanged insults and accusations, which contributed to deepening the societal divide and increasing political polarization.

c) The disparity in priorities between home and abroad and the deepening sense of abandonment

Under the ongoing war, Gazans are living under tremendous psychological and existential pressure, facing the threat of annihilation and struggling to survive, while observing - through screens and media - varying attitudes from the outside world, and

⁷ Murtaja, Zaki. The Palestinian Division and Its Impact on Development in Gaza Governorates: Challenges and Solutions. Al-Quds Open University Journal for Research and Studies, Issue 34, pp. 267–306.

⁸ For more information:

Al Jazeera, President Abbas insults Hamas live on air; Hamas responds (Video)

<https://www.aljazeeramubasher.net/news/4>

Senior Hamas official Osama Hamdan responds to President Mahmoud Abbas

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYxCB0UcLh8>

Erakat, Iman. Why Have Accusations Resurfaced Between the Palestinian Presidency and Hamas? BBC, 2025.

<https://www.bbc.com/arabic/articles/c4g035gvw94>

⁹ End of a Tyrannical Rule page. “Gaza’s True and Honest Voice: The People Want Khammash to Step Down. Don’t Talk About Conspiracies or Foreign Agendas.” Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/watch>

¹⁰ Palestinians Abroad page. “Fatah Movement’s Statement: Nothing Less Than High Treason.” Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?f>

even from Palestinians in the diaspora or inside the West Bank. This disparity in priorities and reaction to the disaster has created a deep emotional gap between Gazans and other Palestinians, with a sense of abandonment or “letting go” beginning to creep into the collective consciousness of the population in Gaza.

For example, many Gazans express a sense of anger at the lack of popular or official response elsewhere, invoking the rhetoric that “Gaza alone is being annihilated” or that “Gazan blood is cheaper¹¹” - rhetoric that reflects a high level of frustration, but also fuels feelings of hatred and hostility. Many posts circulated phrases such as “Where are you people of the West Bank?” “The squares of the West Bank are empty and the world is watching¹².” Some speeches even went so far as to characterize Palestinians abroad as ‘disconnected from reality,’ with leaders living in hotels and disconnected from the reality of Gaza¹³, showing a recurring pattern of self-flagellation mixed with accusation.¹⁴

On the other hand, some Palestinians outside Gaza feel that the criticism directed at them is unjust and reflects a denial of their different reality and its complexities, which generates a state of distance and closure.¹⁵ In the West Bank, publications have emerged defending this position, such as: “The West Bank is under military occupation, and resistance is suicide,” or ‘Not all of us are able to take to the street, but it doesn't mean we are not with you.’ These responses reveal attempts to explain the relative silence not as a passive stance, but as a result of great Israeli pressure due to the violent policies of settlers and the nature of the West Bank.¹⁶

These mutual feelings, however fleeting, are the seeds for more widespread hate speech in the long run, especially if they are linked to implicit or direct discourses of discrimination, whether by hinting at the privileges of certain groups outside Gaza or by blaming expatriates who have not “returned” for defense or solidarity on the ground. For example, some users used phrases such as “come share a tent with us,¹⁷” expressions that fuelled emotional and political exclusion. With the weakening of inclusive frameworks, such as the Liberation Organization or national factions, these tensions lose their regulators and turn into living narratives within communities, threatening any project of reconciliation or societal reconstruction after the end of the war.

¹¹ Al-Fayrouz, Ali. 2023. Gaza is Being Annihilated... and the World Watches! Al-Rai.

<https://www.alraimedia.com/article/166>

¹² Arabi, Sari. 2024. ‘Where is the West Bank?’ —A Question for the Times of Gaza’s Wars. 7iber.

<https://www.7iber.com/politics-economics>

¹³ Hanaa El Khaldy. Palestinians Are Divided into Two Camps Due to the Genocide. Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/hanaa.el.khaldy.2025/posts/>

¹⁴ Al-Mawjood. 2024. Hamas Leaders Live in 7-Star Hotels... Fatah: Does Hamas Want Us to Appoint a Prime Minister from Iran?

<https://new.almogaz.com/news/politics/2024/03/16/2108573>

¹⁵ Al Jazeera. The Intercept: Palestinian Diaspora Survivors of War Feel Guilt and Powerlessness.

<https://www.aljazeera.net/politics/2023/12/10/%86>

Al-Araby Al-Jadeed. Palestinians and Arabs Around the World: Our Hearts Are with Gaza.

<https://www.alaraby.co.uk/society/A9>

¹⁶ Middle East. In the West Bank... Palestinians Live in Fear of Settler Attacks.

<https://aawsat.com/%D8%A7%D9%86>

¹⁷ Raya Media Network. Have You Tried Living in a Tent?!

<https://www.raya.ps/news/1168522.html>

d) Other additional factors that catalysed hate speech during the Gaza War are linked to complex factors that fuelled it and accelerated its spread, such as:

- Collective stress and insecurity and its impact on hate speech and intolerance

In light of the daily exposure to shelling, forced displacement, and scenes of destruction and death, residents of the Gaza Strip face a state of collective psychological stress and prolonged collective trauma, which led to the disintegration of the social fabric and the erosion of collective empathy, which was reflected in the rise in negative emotions, societal tension, and accusatory and hateful discourse. A comprehensive research review on psychological stress among Palestinian youth in the Gaza Strip confirmed that the traumatic experiences associated with the war - direct violence, loss of loved ones, and witnessing demolition and destruction - led to high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, especially among adolescents, making mental health a pressing challenge in the Gazan context.¹⁸ In an environment that suffers from a decline in psychosocial support, this collective psychological stress becomes a fertile environment for discourses of intolerance, aggression, and societal tensions. The decline in psychological resilience mechanisms, the loss of personal and collective security, and the diminished horizon for the future all fuel identity closure and excessive emotional outbursts, thus promoting exclusionary tendencies and hate speech among individuals and groups.

- Worsening economic crises and the breakdown of social ties as a source of hate speech and intolerance

The ongoing war and siege on the Gaza Strip have led to the near-complete collapse of the infrastructure, exacerbated poverty and unemployment rates, and increased the gap between classes, deepening the sense of social tension and creating a general state of tension and frustration.

This was accompanied by a gradual erosion of the social fabric, manifested in the disintegration of family and community ties, especially in light of the mass displacement to shelters. In these cramped and overcrowded spaces, conflicts over limited resources such as food, blankets, or even space between tents have escalated. Minor disagreements turned into violent conflicts, sometimes to the point of estrangement between families. One notable example is a violent fight between two brothers over a can of chickpeas, which led to the severing of ties between their families.

Mr. Di Domenico, the UN Commissioner in Gaza, summarized this drastic shift by saying that “generosity and family cohesion have been at the core of Gaza's culture, but harsh conditions have pushed society towards a ‘rule of the strongest’ rule.” He added that the war and siege created a climate of competition and conflict instead of solidarity,

¹⁸ Mental Health & Prevention, Consequences of war-related traumatic stress among Palestinian young people in the Gaza Strip: A scoping review, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212657023000478>

which led to the decline of the traditional value system that supported society in times of crisis.¹⁹

This shift from cooperation to conflict, from cohesion to rupture, has not only produced violent behaviours, but has also spawned new patterns of convulsive discourse, fuelled by hatred, fanaticism, and closure. Thus, economic and social crises have shifted from being situational challenges to active generators of symbolic and physical violence, weakening societal cohesion and perpetuating internal division that threatens the stability of the social fabric in the foreseeable future.²⁰

- The decline and absence of a unified, inclusive community leadership capable of controlling public discourse has left the field open to individual and subjective discourses that are dominated by anger, fear, and blame

The role of community leaders and mukhtars in Gaza, who have been a symbol of order and social cohesion for decades, has significantly eroded under the weight of successive crises. In the Amal neighbourhood in Khan Younis, mukhtar Abu Ahmed tried to calm a fight between youths over the use of limited water, but was rebuffed, as youths lost confidence in his ability to resolve conflicts. “We don't trust you anymore,” said one of them, pointing to the erosion of social ties, as youths felt that mukhtars no longer had any influence in the face of emerging crises.

Another story that reflects the loss of the mukhtar's declining role is the case of Amjad in Deir al-Balah, who was robbed by an armed youth. Although Amjad turned to the mukhtar of the robber's family, he found that the mukhtar himself was unable to take decisive action, admitting that his influence was no longer what it used to be. Two days later, Amjad witnessed the young assailant involved in another fight in the market, deepening his sense of lawlessness and that no family deterrent could bind the young man or anyone else.²¹

As the chaos escalated and the ability of community leaders or mukhtars diminished, citizens began to pursue their own methods of self-defence, such as banding together to confront attackers or resorting to violence. One mukhtar says that the absence of police agencies has doubled the volume of conflicts, which is a reason for the rise of hate speech to an uncontrollable level, as one mukhtar can no longer deal with dozens of conflicts per day²².

- The absence of security, justice, and lawlessness as generators of hate speech and intolerance

¹⁹ United Nations – Palestine. 2024. Harsh Living Conditions Are Eroding the Social Fabric in Gaza.
<https://palestine.un.org/ar/>
Alternate link: <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2024/06/113144>

²⁰ UNDP & ESCWA. 2024. Potential Social and Economic Impacts of the Gaza War on Neighboring Arab Countries.
(Document source appears to be a Chrome extension; proper citation requires a valid web link or PDF name)

²¹ Community Organizing: Previous Study, p.19.

²² Interview conducted on 11/05/2025 with Mukhtar Talaat (Sh) in Khan Younis City

The war on Gaza led to the collapse of justice and security institutions, creating a dangerous legal vacuum that opened the door to societal chaos. The disintegration of the legal system and the absence of deterrents helped spread hateful and discriminatory behaviours. Organized crimes such as theft of IDPs' property became widespread, fuelling hate speech against groups perceived as beneficiaries or protected.²³

This situation worsened in shelters and camps, where daily disputes over scarce resources turned into violent conflicts, accompanied by the disintegration of social ties and the decline of solidarity, to be replaced by a neurotic discourse based on family or factional affiliation, often accompanied by stigmatization and betrayal of the other. In the absence of the law, the logic of “self-justice” prevailed, and some families resorted to forming armed protection groups and imposing *fait accompli* through harsh methods, which reinforced the logic of “might makes right” and perpetuated a hostile individualism that threatens the societal fabric.²⁴

The absence of state authority also led to the rise of new patterns of loyalty and hegemony that feed on local cliques and view the different other - familial, regional, or economic - as a rival that must be neutralized or besieged. Dangerous indicators of this slide have emerged through the widespread carrying of bladed weapons among youth and resorting to networks of social influence for protection, which exacerbates the climate of tension and opens the door wide for the escalation of hate speech, especially in light of the collapse of values and institutions left behind by the war.²⁵

This deterioration is not limited to the security aspect, but reflects a deeper collapse in the system of values that used to establish tolerance and solidarity, to be replaced by the logic of conflict and exclusion, in a society that suffers from the wounds of war and the collapse of the state at the same time.

- Mismanagement of displacement and relief operations reinforces feelings of injustice and marginalization

The chaotic management of displacement and relief operations has contributed to a deepening sense of injustice among those affected, especially in the absence of clear criteria for the distribution of aid and the emergence of factional biases in the provision of humanitarian support. Reports and press investigations revealed partisan interference and political favouritism that affected the delivery of aid, which led to the deprivation of large categories of affected people, especially those who are independent or not affiliated with specific organizations. This discrimination in relief has reinforced hate speech and fanaticism, and fuelled feelings of disharmony between segments of society, at a time when relief is supposed to be a tool to promote solidarity and cohesion. While displaced people were lost between multiple shelters without receiving the minimum level of assistance, a general impression was established that survival is not governed

²³ United Nations – Palestine. (2024). Harsh living conditions are leading to the erosion of the social fabric in Gaza. <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2024/06/1131446>

²⁴ Armed clashes between the (B) and (Q) families during wartime in Khan Younis on 15/04/2025.

²⁵ Mousa (Atallah). Previously Cited Source, p.20.

by need, but by loyalty and affiliation, which undermines citizens' trust in humanitarian justice and threatens the unity of the societal fabric.²⁶

- Lack of legal and institutional deterrence and fostering an environment of hate speech

The absence of a specific legal framework to criminalize hate speech in the Palestinian territories, especially during the Gaza war, contributed to the prevalence of incitement and racist expression without accountability. Although the Palestinian Basic Law stipulates equality among citizens and guarantees freedom of opinion and expression, it does not contain explicit provisions addressing hate speech as a behaviour that threatens civil peace. This legislative vacuum has allowed the circulation of derogatory and discriminatory speech, especially through the media and social media platforms, without effective oversight or legal accountability²⁷. As the war intensified, these discourses became more prominent, as individual expressions turned into tools of factional mobilization and incitement, fuelling political and societal factions and deepening divisions within the exhausted society. The absence of legal deterrence not only provided cover for the spread of hatred, but also made the war a fertile environment for rhetorical unrest, reflecting the fragility of the legal and social protection system in times of crisis.

3. Manifestations of Hate Speech in Gaza

In the midst of the worsening humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, the suffering has not been limited to destruction and losses, but has also brought to the surface disturbing manifestations of internal hate speech that reflect an accelerating disintegration of the social fabric, fueled by daily digital interactions and emergency contexts in shelters. Various patterns of discrimination and stigmatization have emerged, reflecting the depth of the social crisis and the resulting collective emotions:

- Regional and political discrimination: Labels such as “expatriates” or “north/south” emerged as tools for sorting and questioning people's intentions, accusations that residents of certain areas “brought family troubles” or “transferred the crisis,” and some IDPs were described as “outsiders who occupied schools” or “caused chaos.” or “the cause of chaos,” in references that perpetuate division and reinforce feelings of alienation within the community.²⁸

- Economic and social discrimination: A state of suspicion and resentment prevailed, as some were accused of exploiting the crisis through comments such as “thieves of donations” or “they are acting against us”, and posts with pictures of aid recipients with derogatory comments spread, which contributed to deepening exclusion and contempt within environments that are supposed to be solidarity-oriented.²⁹

²⁶ Aman Coalition. Gaza Aid: Distribution Between Justice and Favoritism. <https://www.aman-monitor.org/ar/Article/1%A9>

²⁷ Saja Majdoubah. (2021). Palestinian Electoral Culture and Hate Speech. Al-Haq: Law in the Service of Man. <https://www.alhaq.org/ar/advoca6>

²⁸ Ihab Fafous. Escalation of Family Disputes in Gaza: Deaths and Injuries Amid Calls for Calm. https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=631888156441661&id=100088614471704&_rdr

²⁹ Editor. (2024). Exploiting Gaza's Humanitarian Catastrophe to Raise "Suspicious Donations". <https://almuharar.gou.edu/2024/08/10/%b9/>

- These manifestations were not separated from the reality of **the security and economic chaos** that created a climate that allowed for the collapse of societal values. The absence of law encouraged theft and assault on property, weakened the spirit of solidarity, and led to the emergence of narrow individual and family loyalties instead of commitment to the collective interest. New social classes were created as a result of war exploitation, further exacerbating divisions and individualism. Widespread theft and crime have deepened the sense of fear and insecurity, and this has spilled over into everyday relationships, where suspicion of the other has become the norm, and community cooperation is more fragile than ever.³⁰

The rhetoric and behaviour characterized by fanaticism and hatred in Gaza today shows a more complex face than a mere political or regional conflict. It is a composite product of the accumulation of violence, the deterioration of values, the loss of security, and the collapse of the collective protection system created by the war, imposing the urgent need for comprehensive approaches that restore social cohesion and confront the roots of this discourse before it turns into a permanent state of societal division.

4. The societal effects of hate speech in Gaza after the war, most notably:³¹

Threatening the social fabric: Increased psychological and physical barriers between social groups, widespread feelings of hostility and lack of trust between individuals, which weakens the chances of reconciliation and social reconstruction in the future. Phrases such as “people of the north” or “people of the south” have emerged, reflecting a tendency to marginalize certain groups.

Individual psychological effects: Feelings of exclusion, internal alienation, and lack of belonging among some groups, especially children and women in destroyed areas or in shelters. Comments describing displaced people as “occupying schools” or “competing with locals for aid,” which directly affects their sense of security and integration and pushes them into psychological and social isolation.

Fueling violence and incitement to hatred: Rates of community violence and family disputes increased significantly after the war, amid growing incitement to hatred through social media. Unofficial statistics indicate that 14 people were killed during June 2024 in different areas of the Gaza Strip, while 21 others were killed during May in cities such as Rafah, Khan Younis, and Deir al-Balah³². This sharp escalation compared to 2022, when the total number of homicides amounted to only 36 throughout the year, shows an alarming deterioration in community security indicators and an increase in cases of extrajudicial killings and misuse of weapons. These figures reflect a sharp increase in feelings of tension, intolerance, and hatred, reaching the point of

³⁰ Mousa (Ataallah), previously cited source, p. 18.

³¹ Mousa (Ataallah), previously cited source, p. 20.

³² Middle East. (2024). Chaos and Lawlessness: Another Face of the Gaza War – Rise in Killings and Looting as Hamas Loses Control of the Streets. <https://aawsat.com/9>

Alhurra. (2024). Report: Killings and Thefts Deepen the Chaos in Gaza. <https://www.alhurra.com/palestine9>

family crimes and violent explosions within the social fabric, in the context of the collapse of the post-war social control system.³³

5. Proposed policies and mechanisms to counter hate speech and build a tolerant society

The experience of the aggression shows that hate speech is fuelled by the war environment with its fear and deprivation, not just by political differences. Therefore, addressing it requires a comprehensive policy that addresses its roots and restores the social fabric.

First: At the national and institutional level

1.A comprehensive national strategy to combat wartime hate speech. This strategy is based on:

- An educational component that aims to promote solidarity behaviours, by introducing emergency educational modules in schools and shelters, such as “cooperation activities between displaced people and hosts,” or telling real stories of social solidarity during bombing and displacement.
- A media component aimed at countering inflammatory rhetoric by producing reports and programs documenting heroic acts of tolerance, such as sheltering displaced families for free, or student initiatives to support affected areas.
- A legal component that revives the idea of moral deterrence, through legislation that criminalizes racial profiling (e.g., “the people of the north brought the war”), with community reporting tools that protect victims of hate speech inside camps or on social media.

2. Rebuilding the relationship between the citizen and the institution: The loss of trust in state institutions and factions during the war, as a result of large sectors feeling let down or discriminated against, calls for a comprehensive review of the performance of institutions and the publication of transparent reports:

- A comprehensive review of the performance of institutions, publishing transparent reports on mechanisms for distributing aid and resources, and opening direct channels to receive complaints from citizens inside displacement centres.
- Example: When it is rumoured, that areas affiliated with a particular faction receive more aid, a detailed and fair documentation of the distribution mechanisms must be provided to prevent suspicions from turning into structural hatred.

3.Establishing a social observatory for crises: It works to monitor the developments of social discourse during crises through digital and psychological field teams, with weekly reports that help decision-makers and humanitarian organizations in preventive intervention.

³³ Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. (2022). Annual Report 2022: Palestinian Human Rights Violations and Obstacles to Democratic Transition, p. 22.

4.Strengthening the legal system to protect the social fabric: Adopt a special emergency law to combat hate speech in contexts of displacement and aggression, clarifying the limits of legitimate expression under war, and preventing the exploitation of the crisis to fuel exclusionary or fearful discourse. Ensure that the implementation of the law is not politicized, so that it is a tool for protection rather than repression.

Secondly: At the community and civil society level

- Anti-hate campaigns in shelters by organizing small public meetings between displaced and host families to recount their experiences and document actual solidarity, using flyers and posters that promote messages such as: “Stronger Together” or ‘The South is our home’.
- Empowering youth initiatives and local councils by supporting youth initiatives to organize dialogue workshops between different groups (e.g., IDPs from Jabalia and youth from Rafah) to promote mutual understanding and dismantle stereotypes fuelled by the harsh conditions of the war.
- Establishing community accountability by launching community-based online platforms to report hate speech in digital or physical space, with regular publication of monitoring results and recommendations to engage the community in accountability.
- Secondly: At the community and civil society level
- Anti-hate campaigns in shelters by organizing small public meetings between displaced and host families to recount their experiences and document actual solidarity, using flyers and posters that promote messages such as: “Stronger Together” or ‘The South is our home’.
- Empowering youth initiatives and local councils by supporting youth initiatives to organize dialogue workshops between different groups (e.g., IDPs from Jabalia and youth from Rafah) to promote mutual understanding and dismantle stereotypes fuelled by the harsh conditions of the war.
- Establishing community accountability by launching community-based online platforms to report hate speech in digital or physical space, with regular publication of monitoring results and recommendations to engage the community in accountability

Third: At the psychosocial level

- Group psychological support programs within the shelters, by providing interactive group support sessions for children and women through trained teams, focusing on reducing the feeling of stigma and isolation and promoting the values of mutual respect.
- Arts as a tool for reconciliation: Organizing interactive theatre performances inside shelters such as “Tales from a Tent,” in which children embody their experiences and watch them as dramatized stories, allowing them to express and deconstruct tensions.

- Training psychological and community workers, by preparing a field manual to train workers to monitor indicators of hate speech as a symptom of collective trauma, and how to intervene with psychologically and culturally sensitive approaches.

Fourth: At the local, tribal and family level

- Activating the role of elders and mukhtars: Formally assign them to mediate conflicts within the shelters, document their role in containing disputes, and present them as positive models of community leadership.
- Cooperative economic initiatives between families: Launching simple community cooperative projects (such as collective kitchens or voluntary cleaning teams inside shelters) that create opportunities for positive interaction and reformulate horizontal relationships.

Fifth: A procedural plan for interventions to counter hate speech and build a tolerant society in Gaza

Addressing hate speech in Gaza cannot be done through denial or palliatives, but requires an integrated vision to rebuild the social contract from the heart of the crisis. War tears apart geography and relationships, but conscious policies can turn adversity into an opportunity to crystallize a new collective consciousness based on partnership, equality and mutual respect, and establish an internal societal peace that is no less important than any future political peace.

Field / Axis	Action	Implementing Entity	Timeline	Tools & Means	Expected Outputs
National Planning	Develop a comprehensive national strategy to combat hate speech	Ministry of Justice + Ministry of Education + Civil Society	Within 3 months	Joint working groups, community hearing sessions, reference studies	Government-endorsed national strategy document with civil society participation
Monitoring & Analysis	Establish a social crisis observatory to monitor hate and division	Research centers + Ministries of Social Affairs & Media	Ongoing – starts in 1 month	Database, field teams, digital content analysis, periodic reports	Periodic early warning reports + dynamic database on community discourse
Educational Intervention	Develop emergency educational units on tolerance and respect	Ministry of Education + UNICEF + Educational Experts	Within 45 days	Illustrated booklets, teacher guide, games and extracurricular activities in	Implementation in 30% of shelter schools and temporary

Field / Axis	Action	Implementing Entity	Timeline	Tools & Means	Expected Outputs
				shelters/schools	education centers
Media Intervention	Launch an emergency media campaign promoting unity and respect	Public Broadcasting Authority + Youth Networks	Within 2 months	Videos, social media campaigns, emergency media charter	30% decrease in incitement indicators on local media and social media within 3 months
Psychological Intervention	Implement group psychological support programs for children and women	Ministry of Health + NGOs + Specialists	Ongoing – starts immediately	Support sessions, initial psychological assessment tools, emergency intervention guide	Coverage of 50% of main shelters within 6 months with psychological support programs
Community Intervention	Organize youth and community dialogue sessions to ease tensions	Local Councils + Youth Associations	Within 2 months	“Dialogue Chairs”, mobile community platforms, voluntary commitment documents	100 dialogue sessions in 6 governorates + evaluation reports on local tension reduction
Legal Accountability	Activate a unit to monitor and prosecute incitement and hate speech	Public Prosecution + Cyber Crimes Unit	Ongoing – starts immediately	Online reporting platform, simplified legal guide, hotline	100 documented reports + 10 prosecution memos within 3 months
Community Economic Intervention	Support solidarity projects between displaced and host families	Ministry of Social Development + NGOs	Within 4 months	Financial support, simple agricultural tools, “Community Kitchen” initiatives, microloan funds	30 active community cooperative projects linking economic interests with cohesion
Arts & Storytelling	Produce theatrical shows and	Cultural Centers +	Within 3 months	Interactive performances, mobile	20 interactive performances in

Field / Axis	Action	Implementing Entity	Timeline	Tools & Means	Expected Outputs
	storytelling initiatives to address division	Youth Initiatives		theatre, podcast recordings, community tours	displacement areas + 10 audio episodes on tolerance
Engaging Community Leaders	Activate the role of dignitaries in resolving conflicts and promoting unity	Ministry of Local Government + Reconciliation Committees	Within 2 months	Guidance sessions, memorandums of understanding, documentation of success stories	Documentation of successful interventions in 10 post-war community reconciliations