Hate and propaganda media in Turkey: Affiliations, models and patterns

News reporting in terms of hate media with their contents promoting violence against or harassment of individuals and disadvantaged groups, along with a polarizing rhetoric that fosters fanaticism and again encourages violence in targeting their “hate objects.”

Those media that position themselves as nationalistic, patriotic and critical of the ruling party, the AKP, share a common language with the partisan media when they see threats to the founding ideology of Turkey where the government’s control of the media and communication conflicts with fundamental principles of freedom of speech.

Hate and disinformation narratives in the online mediascape in Turkey

It seems that it is mostly the state actors lighting the fuse for using language of enmity towards the political opposition and journalists critical of the government. The discourse of terror accompanies the hate speech.

Hostile language towards political opponents of the government and critical journalists goes along with death threats and humiliation, respectively.

Policy recommendations for countering hate and propaganda media and communication

Monitoring of financial connections between media owners and the government should be performed on a regular basis by the NGOs conducting media ownership watch to indicate interdependence between the ruling party/government and hate and propaganda media and their owners.

In order to distinguish which institutions or individuals benefit from impunity, a monitoring mechanism should be established to render the judiciary’s different interpretations of the boundaries between hate speech and freedom of expression visible.

Data mapping for “media owners and their other investments” through networks such as the “Network of Dispossessions” should be updated on a regular basis otherwise a new open access database or map should be established by the NGOs and volunteers working with them and the reports should be published at least quarterly.

A self-regulatory body should be established and developed by the non-governmental organisations who conduct media monitoring in order to render hate speech and disinformation in all media visible. They should develop the mechanisms and tools to facilitate the monitoring and publishing of “Social Media Hate Watch” reports weekly, monthly, and yearly.

Monitoring efforts should not be limited to the media organisations known to generate hate content; the online media accounts and Twitter accounts of the platforms that claim to publish content; the online media accounts and Twitter accounts of the platforms that claim to publish hate content and developed by the non-governmental organisations who conduct media monitoring in all media visible. They should develop the mechanisms and tools to facilitate the monitoring and publishing of “Social Media Hate Watch” reports weekly, monthly, and yearly.

New regulations for media ownership are needed in order to break the domination of hate media in a hopefully pluralistic media environment.

Media literacy campaigns by civil society organisations should be encouraged to react against hate content.

These are findings of the research on hate and propaganda models of media and communication in Turkey and findings of the research on hate narratives in Turkey conducted, in 2020, within the project “Resilience – Civil society action to reaffirm media freedom and counter disinformation and hateful propaganda in the Western Balkans and Turkey” in seven countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.