

Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media: Research Study

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I- Introduction (hate speech)

Reaching a clear definition of “hate speech” was a long process, since we were aiming at formulating an operational definition compatible with the objectives of our project. In this regard, UNESCO is aiming at putting such a definition through a complex and careful approach to strike the necessary balance between guaranteeing freedom of expression where people have the right to express their opinions in multiple forms, and restricting those opinions when they cause harm to others. SCM defends individuals’ and Media’s rights to freedom of expression, which appears in a number of previous publications¹ by SCM where violations to this right were documented.

In this context, it is important to note the following: To begin with, it may seem easy at first sight to define “hate speech” however, there is not a universally shared definition. This renders finding common bases a difficult task. But it also allows researchers enough scientific flexibility to determine their own approach to the concept according to the objectives and methodology of each research. To a large extent formulating a clear definition of “hate speech” and what determines it was a challenge. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as the majority of rights’ conventions do not include a description of hate speech as mentioned in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights report for 2006 entitled “Incitement to racial and religious hatred and the promotion of tolerance” OHCHR.

Despite the clear absence of a definition from the beginning, international laws and legislation do not reject the fact that hate speech constitutes a crime, where article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which call for prohibition by law of any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. Article 4 of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination condemn all propaganda and all organizations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one color or ethnic origin, or which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form.

¹The SCM has issued a number of publications in the framework of defense to individuals’ and organizations’ right to freedom of expression such as: State of Media and Freedom of Expression Syria 2008 – 2009, State of Media and Freedom of Expression Syria 2006, State of Media and Freedom of Expression Syria 2007: State of Media and Freedom of Expression Syria 2011-2012

The attempt to define the concept of hate speech clashed with the possibility infringing upon the freedom of expression. Therefore, the SCM cares for facing the hate speech and incitement to violence as much as it rejects any violations of freedom of expression. Also, the UNESCO defends the fact that the free flow of information must always be the rule rather than the exception. The potential conflict between freedom of expression and hate speech and incitement to violence or hatred remained a preoccupation for international legislators until the promulgation/enactment in 2009 of article 19 on reinforcement of freedom of expression, also known as the “Camden Principles”². The article 19 is seen as a progressive interpretation that avoids potential conflict between freedom of expression to which the SCM is dedicated and the hate speech that the Center is also dedicated to monitoring and combating.

“Camden Principles” explains the terms ‘hatred’ and ‘hostility’ as referring to “intense and irrational emotions of opprobrium, enmity and detestation towards the target group”. The term advocacy according to the principles, is to be understood as “requiring an intention to promote hatred publicly towards the target groups”. The term ‘incitement’ refers to “statements about national, racial or religious groups which create an imminent risk of discrimination, hostility or violence against persons belonging to those groups”.

In the Syrian context, article 12 of the Media Law promulgated by legislative decree no. 108/2011 bans publishing any content that can threaten national unity, national security, insulting Abrahamic religions, religious beliefs or inciting sectarian or confessional tensions, inciting violence, crimes terrorism, hatred and racism. According to Syrian law for sanctions those who commit acts of libel and slander using any type media are liable to sanctions provided by the criminal law. Fines range from 200 thousand Syrian pounds up to one million. The legislative decree no. 17/2012 relative to the application of the provisions of the Internet communication and fight against cybercrime law, which contains 36 articles, and aims at regulating Internet communications and fighting against cybercrime. The law defines the service providers’ (data and cell phones) responsibilities, it also provides legal characterization for cybercrimes and sanctions for perpetrators. In 2018, a decision was made to establish specialized courts for this

² Article 19, Global Campaign for Free Expression, *The Camden Principles on Freedom of Expression and Equality*, April 2009, available at <https://www.article19.org/data/files/pdfs/standards/the-camden-principles-on-freedom-of-expression-and-equality.pdf>

type of litigation (magistrate's court, first instance, court of cassation and criminal trial court). As much as these laws and legislations look like they have been designed to control hate speech and incitement to violence through media, they might be used politically to limit freedom of expression and stifle opinions, especially those of the opposition, through the use of general and none precise terms such as (national unity, national security, patriotic security).

On the other hand, there is no legal prohibition against incitement to hatred in national laws and legislations of most MENA countries. This point was discussed during the regional experts' workshop sessions on how to face the incitement to hatred, organized by the OHCHR in 2011. The Rabat Plan of Action indicated that the general practice in using relevant national legislations is often either the absence of trials of the genuine agitators, or the use of anti-hate legislations to stifle minorities (under cover of national laws against incitement). The Rabat Plan of Action also indicated the lack of national legislation in most countries to address forms of hate speech, and where they existed, they are generally limited to religious or ethnic discrimination. Also, they are usually used in a selective manner only for the benefit of the state. This was mentioned as well in the UNESCO's report (countering online hate speech) in 2015, "hate speech continues largely to be used in everyday discourse as a generic term, mixing concrete threats to individuals' and groups' security with cases in which people may be simply venting their anger against authority"

Recently, a number of countries began to propose legislations and promulgate laws that are supposed to help limit hate speech. Among these legislations are: The federal decree in the U.A.E no.2/ 2015 on fight against discrimination and hatred, criminalizing blasphemy against religions and sacred, and fighting against all forms of discrimination and hatred speech expressed in any form. The draft law presented by Al Azhar in Egypt, July 2017 to fight against hatred and violence in the name of religion.

II- Problem statement

The Media Monitoring Reports in a number of MENA countries show that, hate speech in the Media of the region have increased after the political movements in 2011. For example, in Tunisia the results of monitoring of print media done by the Arab Working Group for Media Monitoring in 2013 have shown that the prevalence rate of hate speech in newspapers published in Arabic

was 90,3 % and that 13% of hate speeches observed included explicit or implicit calls for violence. In Yemen, incitement represented 86,3% of the editorial content observed by the National Foundation for Development and Human Response in 2013. In the same year, a study entitled “Visual Media and Moral Norms” written by the Arab Network for Media Support on a sample or pool of Egyptian TV channels showed that all the items of the sample committed serious professional misconducts amounting to the promotion of hate speech and incitement to violence.

Therefore, SCM launched the “Observatory of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media”, in partnership with the UNESCO in the second half of 2017 to monitor Syrian media outlets through a number of trained Syrian monitors. Their task is to evaluate to what extent is the hate and incitement to violence speech used. The project is divided in two phases, the first is the preparation of the media monitoring methodology and the training of the monitors on using it and on monitoring tools. The second phase is the monitoring of media outlets and using the results in the service of media development in Syria. **The problem statement can be formulated using the following main question:**

Does Syrian media (audio, visual and print) whether it is politically pro-opposition, pro-regime or Kurdish, use hate speech and incitement to violence?

This question is further subdivided into:

- 1. Which Syrian media use the most the hate and incitement to violence speech, according to media type (audio, visual and print)?**
- 2. Which Syrian media use the most hate and incitement to violence speech, according to political orientation (pro-opposition, pro-regime or Kurdish)?**
- 3. What are the most common words of hate and incitement to violence speech that are used in Syrian media?**

III- Study objectives

The “Observatory of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media “ seeks to build a wider partnership with local and international media, as well as with civil society organizations, to capitalize on experiences and past endeavors in order to achieve the following objectives:

1. Evaluating the extent to which the hate and incitement to violence speech is used in Syrian media.
2. Raising awareness in the Syrian media community as to the reasons why this speech is used, and what are its forms, consequences, and how to deal with this question.
3. Elaborating tools and standards to be used to limit the use of hate and incitement to violence speech.

IV- Importance of the study

The importance of this study from a scientific point of view stems from the fact that it is one of the first studies that seek to tackle the hate speech and incitement to violence in the Syrian media (in all media forms and political orientations). Therefore, it is considered as a solid bases which can be used to evaluate media performance, especially after media boom that created hundreds of new media outlets in Syria after 2011. Thus, elaborating programs that help improve Syrian media and limiting the impact of this damaging hate speech on the Syrian society, as a new step towards national peace and a new and democratic environment where freedom of expression can flourish.

V- Previous studies

The studies that addressed hate speech can be viewed as being rare in the Syrian media field; therefore, the SCM built on its past experience in media monitoring, and used it as a scientific basis for elaborating the methodology for this project. In addition to that, the following regional and international monitoring reports on the use of hate speech in the media were used:

1. Reports based on the monitoring one media:
 - a) Monitoring Lebanese TV content through a series of reports issued by the media center "Maharat" about hate speech in TV talk shows (2013).
 - b) "Maspero, a criminal" report, by the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, Egypt, covering the massacre of 9th of October and the Mohamed Mahmoud Street clashes in 2011 in Egypt.
 - c) The study "Visual Media and Professional and Ethical Standards", by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and the Arab Network for Media Support, about how the talk shows covered the public events in 2013.
2. Reports based on written press content (print and digital)

The Regional Report on Monitoring Hate Speech in the Written Press in Algeria, Morocco, Libya and Jordan, by the MENA Media Monitoring (2016)

3. Reports based on the monitoring of more than one media:

- a) "Monitoring the Hate Speech in Tunisian Media" report, by the MENA Media Monitoring (2013)
- b) "Using Violent Language in the Media and the Repercussions on Yemeni Society", by the National Foundation for Development and Human Response in Yemen (2013)

SCM took a great interest in these studies and reports, and many of the experts who have participated in them were invited to the experts' workshop that was organized in Berlin (24 to 26 October 2017) during the project's preparatory phase.

VI- Study variables:

Based on the types of hate speech included in the Rabat Plan of Action such as (incitement to violence, hate, animosity and racial discrimination); what was defined in The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, there are three forms of incitement which constitute an exception to the right to freedom of expression, which are: incitement to violence, incitement to animosity and hate, incitement to racial discrimination. In addition to the six criteria in article 19 to determine whether the expression of individuals or institutions constitutes hate speech or incitement to violence. We came up with the following variables for the study:

❑ **Dependent variable:** Hate speech and incitement to violence, further divided into the following sub-variables:

- a) Incitement to hate or animosity.
- b) Insulting or stigmatization.
- c) Unjustified accusations.
- d) Discrimination.
- e) Incitement or justification of violence.

❑ **Independent variables:** Evaluation criteria for hate speech and incitement to violence:

1. Expression context.
2. The person who speaks or who controls the means of transmission to the public.
3. Intention of the speaker.
4. The size of the expression and its general nature.
5. Spreading potential.
- 6.. The likelihood of occurrence of the consequences of inciting to violence.

VII- Hypotheses:

❑ **First hypothesis:**

Syrian media (print, audio, and visual) regardless of their political orientations (pro-opposition, pro-regime, Kurdish) use hate speech and incitement to violence.

❑ **Second hypothesis:**

The existence of significant differences in the extent in which Syrian media uses hate speech and incitement to violence.

This hypothesis is further sub-divided into the following:

- a) The existence of a significant difference in the extent in which the Syrian media uses hate speech and incitement to violence, based on the type of media (press, audio, visual).
- b) The existence of a significant difference in the extent in which the Syrian media uses hate speech and incitement to violence, based on political orientation (pro-opposition, pro-regime, Kurdish).
- c) There are significant differences between the extent to which pro-regime media use hate speech and incitement to violence, depending on the ownership of the media (private, government).

❑ **Third hypothesis:** (related to the second monitoring phase).

There is a significant evidence that the occurrence of a political event (military campaigns on a certain region, civilians' massacres), increases the use of hate speech in the different Syrian media (press, audio, and visual) regardless of different political orientations (opposition, pro-regime, Kurdish).

VIII- Scope

1. Geographical scope: This study is limited to Syrian media (print, audio, and visual), whether they are based inside or outside Syria.
2. Scientific scope: This study in its first and second monitoring phases shall be limited to investigating the extent to which hate speech is used in the Syrian media (print, audio, and visual), regardless of political orientations (pro-opposition, pro-regime, Kurdish). It will focus on the extent to which the hate speech in Syrian media is used based on media type and on political orientation.
3. Timeline: the timeline of the study starts at the preparatory phase for the project, which started in December of 2017 and lasts until the first final report of the first monitoring phase on the 29th of June 2018.

This phase covers the following steps:

- Forming a team of trainees, technical experts, researchers, and data analysts.
- Preparing a draft dictionary expressions and terminology which incite to hatred, and violence based on past experience of organizations and foundations, as well as the recommendations of the experts of the Berlin workshop.

- Launching a call for applications for those who want to take a training on media monitoring and participate in the project.
- Preliminary selection of the sample to be monitored within this study.
- Defining the deadlines for the two monitoring phases.
- Selecting monitors who will participate in the project.
- Adopting the manual of expressions and terminology that will be used.
- Organizing a training workshop for media monitors in Turkey.
- Revising the training workshop report and adjusting the media monitoring plan according to its results.
- Carrying a pilot phase of media monitoring (three days) during which the observers can apply what they have learned during the training.
- Evaluating the performance of the monitors.
- Completion of the first monitoring phase.
- Meeting between the implementing team of the project (SCM, the researchers, data analysts, and consultants); to evaluate the performance and results.
- Evaluation of the first media monitoring phase.

VIII- Methodology:

We are using the Descriptive Analytical Method, which is based on studying the phenomena as it is in reality. It focuses on describing it accurately and expressing it both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative description of the phenomena's characteristics in details, and quantitative description of the size of the phenomena and its degree of correlation with other phenomena.³

The Comparative Method shall be used to determine which media uses the most hate speech and incitement to violence sorted by type (press, audio and visual) and by political orientation (Pro-regime, pro-opposition and Kurdish).

X- Population and sample

1. Population:

Syrian media (press, audio and visual), (pro-regime, pro-opposition and Kurdish)

2. Sample:

For selecting the sample, we will use Quota Sampling. This is due to the size of the population for this study, the difficulty to identify it in entirety (as a result of the absence of recent studies on

³ Fahd Khalil Zayed (2007), bases for scientific research methodology in human sciences, Amman, Al Nafaes Publishing and distribution house

active Syrian media that include an exhaustive list). Most studies on Syrian media covering the period from 2011 to 2016, where the number of media in that period drastically changed and a large number closed down and new media outlets appeared. The study population will be divided according to type (print, visual and audio) and to political orientation (pro-regime, pro-opposition and Kurdish). This method gives researchers the choice of the quota they want among each category.⁴

Since the criteria for unit selection from within the sample have been accurately determined, as well as the design of the monitoring forms to fill and the selection of monitors who will do the monitoring; therefore this study is considered to be one the highly regulated and controlled studies. The sample size (10 – 20 units) is acceptable⁵, but in order to further improve the credibility of the results, a sample of 24 units divided equally into the predefined categories which represent the society⁶. With regards to dividing the study sample based on media type (press, visual and audio), and on political orientation (pro-regime, pro-opposition and Kurdish). The classification used by studies and reports that have fully covered the Syrian media post 2011 was adopted.

Accordingly, 24 Media outlets were selected in line with the research criteria as follows: Print Media: 3 newspapers one representing each of the political orientations, 6 websites equally representing the three different political orientations and 3 news agencies one representing each of the political orientations.

Visual Media: 6 TV channels equally representing the three political orientations; two for each orientation.

Audio Media: 6 radio stations equally representing the three political orientations; two for each orientation.

Syrian Media Map, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2013⁷

⁴ Dr. Ahmed Ben Marsaly (2005) Scientific research methodologies in Media and communication sciences, Algeria: University publishers, page 170

⁵ Previous source page 165

⁶ For selection criteria of media for the purpose of this research and the ones who have been selected, please refer to annexe no. 1

⁷ https://iwpr.net/sites/default/files/download/publication/iwpr_syria_media_map.pdf

This report presented a detailed mapping of Syrian media based on a number of criteria for classification, such as: sector (public, private), specialty (political, economic, medical, technological, etc). The report adopted a classification based on political orientation post-2011 (pro-regime, pro-opposition, and Kurdish).

❓ **Syria Audience research 2016, Free Press Unlimited, Media cooperation and translation and Global forum for Media development⁸**

This study presented a survey of the Syrian public opinion in zones controlled by the opposition and in those controlled by the regime, about media having the widest reach and the highest credibility. Among the most important conclusions of this study are the following:

- a) In both zones, TV was considered to be having the widest reach and the highest credibility by the public, followed by digital media, then the press and last the radio.
- b) The opposition media is most widely spread and most credible in the zones controlled by the opposition, and the regime media is the most widely spread and most credible in zones controlled by the regime.

❓ **Syria Media landscape from 2011 to early 2016, Collaboration between the Syrian Civil Coalition (Tamas), Henta Media Organization and Madani Organization⁹**

The report presented an exhaustive mapping of Syrian media based on two levels; first: geographical (zones controlled by the regime, zones controlled by the opposition, zones controlled by Jihadists, self-governing Kurdish zone). Second: political orientation (pro-regime, opposing the regime, extremists). The report also adopted a criterion to distinguish independent media based on funding, where it defines independent media as: the one that receives financial support from several sources or is capable of financing itself autonomously through its media content and through advertisement.

❓ **Syria's New Media landscape (Independent media born out of war), December 2016, Middle East Institute¹⁰**

This report presented a survey of non-governmental media that was launched in Syria after the war. These have been divided based on political orientation into pro-regime, pro-opposition, Kurdish, independent. The report adopted a definition of independent regime media and of independent opposition media, as being: media that pursue to a minimum professional criteria for journalism and applies these criteria equally when dealing with the rebels or with the regime,

⁸ Syria Audience research 2016, Free Press Unlimited,2016
https://www.freepressunlimited.org/sites/freepressunlimited.org/files/audience_research_syria_2016.pdf

⁹ Lorenzo Trombetta, syria-Media Landscape, Media Landscapes, 2018, 8
<https://medialandscapes.org/country/pdf/syria>

¹⁰ Antoun Issa, Syria's New Media Landscape, Independent Media Born out of war, Middle East Institute, 9 December 2016, https://www.mei.edu/sites/default/files/publicationspp9_Issa_Syrianmedia_web_0.pdf

using terms that indicate impartiality. As for Kurdish independent media they are: media which focuses its covering mainly on the problems of the north eastern part of Syria controlled by Kurdish militias.

Results of the previous studies were developed based on SCM's past experience and in a manner that fits the objectives of this study, where the category (independent or impartial media) was excluded from the sample. Since previous studies have not provided a clear definition of it; one that fits with the objectives of this study monitoring hate speech. Also, after verifying the media that were classified as "independent" or "impartial" according to previous studies, it turned out that there exists a huge overlapping between (pro-regime media, opposition media, and independent media); for example, the newspaper (enab baladi)¹¹ was classified as independent media despite the fact that the slogan of the newspaper is "mn keram al thawra" which means (vines of the revolution).

XI- Study tools

A monitoring form was designed based on the requirements of this study, using the same approach as:

a) "Monitoring hate speech in the Tunisian press Report" published by MENA Media Monitoring (2013). They mainly used Quantitative approach with a qualitative aspect, to explain the quantitative one. It was done using a monitoring form to check a number of variables, that the observers had to fill. In addition to that, it included a remarks section for things that couldn't be measured using quantitative tools. The quantitative part covered the number of repetitions for terms used by the media, when those terms were classified as hate speech and inciting to violence.

b) "Maspero, a criminal, Report" by the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression Egypt. The report monitored 270 minutes of direct broadcasting and news coverage by the official TV in 2011. The reason why we focused on this report is that it analyzed the content for incitement to violence and sectarian division, and thus it meets our project for monitoring hate speech and incitement to violence in a certain number of points.

The methodologies of both projects are similar, where they apply integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative indicators of media content. While the SCM project excludes the

¹¹ Annex no. 1 for more details on criteria for selection of media (for this study)

transcription of the audio content (News), since this requires a huge team dedicated to transcription, a burden time and cost wise.

c) monitoring the performance of Syrian media in covering the presidential referendum: the past experience of the SCM in the years (2007 – 2016) is a good scientific base for the elaboration of this project's methodology. In 2007 the Center monitored the performance of Syria-Media in covering the presidential referendum. In the same year the center issued a report of the Syria-Media during legislative elections.

The monitoring form is divided into four sections. First are the personal data of the monitor as well as the media being monitored. The second section is related to terms and expressions related to hate speech and incitement to violence based on the vocabulary list prepared in advance by the SCM (the dictionary). The third section encompasses a number of variables related to the specificities of each media. The last section are annexes (a photo of the screen or a link to the website).

XII- Data Sources:

Research project was based on two major types of data:

- Primary Data: data collected specifically for the sake of this research throughout monitoring forms which were prepared drawing on SCM's experience in media monitoring. SCM has issued a collection of studies in this field which started with a study about media performance during the parliamentary elections of 2007,³ in addition to reports that summarized regional and international expertise within the field of media content monitoring of hate speech.
- Secondary Data: previous research and reports that presented a comprehensive scanning of Syrian media after 2011.

XIII- Monitoring Process

The project was carried out over two monitoring rounds: A pilot round where 24 monitors were trained on monitoring mechanisms and the use of a hate expressions dictionary and how to use a media type-specific form. After ensuring the preparedness of the monitors, the second monitoring round began and lasted for seven days from 24 May 2018 until 30 May 2018.

1- Monitoring Mechanism:

The monitors monitored media content during the research period in accordance with the following rates:

- Print media: 15 written materials were monitored daily of different categories (news, reports, investigation, interview, op-ed articles, caricatures, short video clips, photo albums and opinion polls).
- Audio media: 6 hours of broadcast were monitored daily divided into two monitoring rounds as follows: 3 hours in the morning from 10am until 1pm, and 3 hours in the afternoon from 6:00pm until 9:00pm.
- Visual media: 5 hours of broadcast are monitored daily for each TV channel divided into the following rounds: two hours from 12:00pm until 1:00pm and three hours in the evening from 6:00pm until 9:00pm.

During the two monitoring rounds, monitors were reassigned randomly in order to mitigate for bias towards the media outlets. Then results of each outlet were compared.

During the second round of monitoring, a total of (998) print media materials, (210) hours of TV broadcast and (210) hours of radio broadcast were monitored. (Welat FM) radio station was excluded from the station samples as it only broadcast songs without any other type of content during the monitoring period. It was established that the station was still in trial broadcast period, and hence all broadcast content was limited to music due to reasons specific to the station.

2- Monitoring Form:

An electronic monitoring form was designed in accordance with the research requirements and was processed to be suitable with the nature of different media types (print, visual and audio). Special versions of the form were dedicated to each media type as follows:

- Print Media: media content of the print media was monitored using two monitoring forms for each media material; the first one was dedicated to monitoring hate expressions mentioned within the content, identifying the type of hate speech used as well as the targeted group. The second form was designed to assess visual content published with the media material (photo, multimedia or caricatures) and identify the type of speech within the visual content and the targeted group.

- Visual Media: TV content was monitored using three forms for each hour of broadcast; The first form was dedicated to monitoring spoken hate expressions during the broadcast time and identifying the type of hate speech and the targeted to the group. The second form monitored visual content (visual effects and videos) during the broadcast time and identified the type of hate speech represented by the visual content and the targeted group. The third form monitored body language and speakers' gestures during broadcast time identifying the type of hate speech represented by body language and gestures as well as the targeted group.

- Audio Media: radio broadcast was monitored using three forms for each hour; the first one monitored the spoken hate expressions during broadcast time and identified the type of hate speech represented by the expressions and the targeted group. The second form monitored audio content (auditory effects and music) during broadcast time, identifying the type of hate speech represented by the auditory content as well as the targeted group. The third form monitored the speakers' voice tone and delivery, identifying the type of hate speech represented by the voice tone and delivery as well as the targeted group.

At the end of the monitoring process, the forms were reviewed by a specialist team in order to check hate speech expressions and vocabulary mentioned in the forms and their context. As a result of the review (3258) forms were validated as follows: (1962) forms for print media, (654) forms for visual media and (642) forms for audio media.

- **Difficulties faced during the monitoring process:**

The project faced a number of difficulties during the monitoring process that affected the number of forms received. The most significant of these difficulties were:

- The difference in publishing time between monitored newspapers, (daily, weekly, fortnightly). Therefore, websites of the print newspapers were monitored in place of printed copies during the monitoring time after ensuring conformity between printed and digital copies of the newspapers.

- Disparity between the rates of daily publishing in print media, where some newspapers had a rate of less than 15 materials per day while others had more.

- The monitoring process took place during the month of Ramadan, which meant a significant percentage of audio and visual content included entertainment programs such as TV series, variety shows and competition shows.

- A significant proportion of the print media with political orientation (pro-regime) based its contents on information fed by the SANA news agency which created a difficulty in monitoring original content of these outlets.

XIV- Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using Microsoft Excel software and the descriptive analysis approach was adopted to reach research conclusions, as follows:

- Recurrences and percentages used as a descriptive approach in order to calculate the occurrence rate of hate speech of the total media content in each media outlet, according to the following calculation:

The percentage of usage of hate speech by the media outlets = recurrences of hate speech monitoring forms for the outlet/the total number of monitoring forms * 100

- Arithmetic means as a descriptive approach to calculate the total percentages of the usage of media types (print, audio, visual) and the political orientations of the media outlets (pro regime, opposition, Kurdish), in addition to calculating the general percentage of hate speech use in Syrian media.
- Due to adopting the methodology of only presenting results to one decimal place, there could be discrepancies in the percentages not exceeding a maximum of 1%.

XV- Operational definitions:

The monitoring process shall adopt the following definition for hate speech:

Press, audio, visual or digital speech aiming at real or symbolic elimination (killing) of the other, exclusion or demeaning. This definition includes violations such as libel, slander, stigmatization, discrimination and up to incitement to killing and violence.

This is in line with the types of hate speech in the Rabat Plan of Action (incitement to violence, incitement to hatred, animosity or racial discrimination). In general, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights opted for three forms of incitement which constitute an exception to freedom of expression, and those are: incitement to violence, incitement to hatred and animosity and incitement to racial discrimination.

In this project, SCM shall monitor the following actions:

a) Incitement to kill or violence: shows, phrases, words, images and drawings on which an incitement speech is based explicitly or implicitly. A speech that justifies, pushes or encourages the person at the receiving end to behave violently or commit a murder crime. All values of discrimination based on race, ethnicity or belief according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and on international conventions.

- b) Incitement and instigation to revenge or attempt on others, whether against a person or a group through to cause emotional or physical harm.
- c) Stigmatization: Throwing degrading names or certain sticking characteristics at others to deprives them from social acceptance. Also depicting a negative stereotype about the other or affirming one.

This project is based on six criteria to determine whether or not individuals or organizations are advocates of hate speech or incitement to violence. These criteria are:

1. The context in which the expression was said
2. The person who said the expression or was in control of its transmission to public
3. The intention of that person (negligence or imprudence are not enough to qualify for hate speech or incitement to violence crimes)
4. The size of the expression and its general nature (speech form and content, and were the arguments used mentioned as historical information or scientific facts)
5. Its spreading potential
6. Probability for the results based on the speech to take place/The likelihood of occurrence of the consequences of inciting to violence
7. The variation of the magnitude of the impact of hate speech and incitement to violence

XVI- Analysis

The following conclusions to the research hypotheses were drawn after processing the data statistically.

First Hypothesis

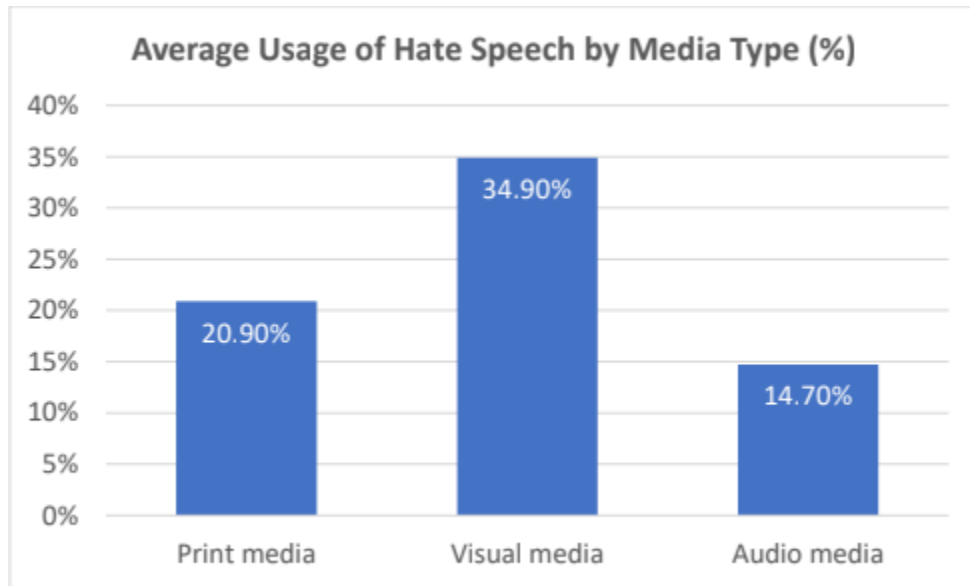
Research results presented in table (1) have confirmed validity of first hypothesis, i.e. “all Syrian media of various types (print, audio, and visual) and of various political orientations (pro regime, opposition, Kurdish) use hate speech and incitement to violence”.

Table 1: The Use of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media

| Type of Media | Total number of media materials monitored | Recurrences of hate speech in the first section | Recurrences of hate speech in the second section | Recurrences of hate speech in the third section | Average usage of hate speech (%) | Contribution to the total use of hate speech (%) |
|---------------|---|---|--|---|----------------------------------|--|
| Print media | 1962 | 369 | 24 | - | 20.9% | 54.5% |
| Visual media | 654 | 117 | 89 | 26 | 34.9% | 32.2% |
| Audio media | 642 | 87 | 4 | 4 | 14.7% | 13.2% |
| Total | 3528 | 573 | 117 | 30 | 23.5% | 100% |

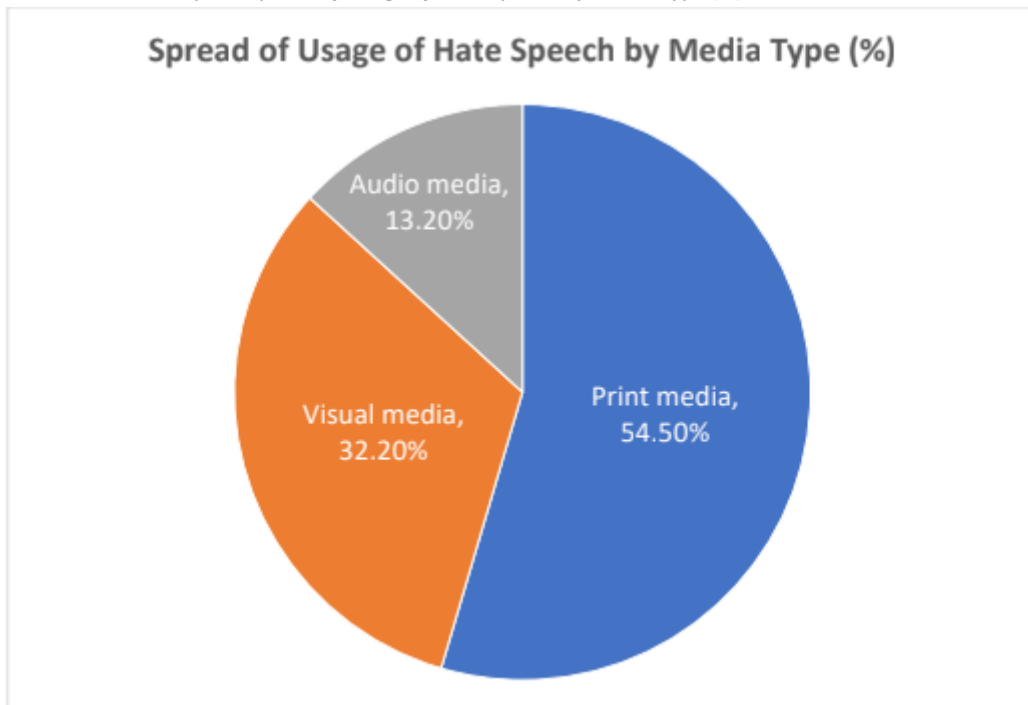
Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Graph 1: Average Usage of Hate Speech by Media Type (%)



Source: Table 1

Graph 2: Spread of Usage of Hate Speech by Media Type (%)



Source: Table 1

Table (1) shows that the average use of hate speech and incitement to violence reached (23.5%) of the media content in the sample. The highest percentage of hate speech and incitement to violence usage was by visual media with an average use of (34.9%) of the media content. The total percentage of hate

speech in visual media in the sample was (32.2%). Print media ranked second with an average use of hate speech and incitement to violence of (20.9%) of all published content. The total percentage of hate speech in print media in the sample was (54.5%), this is attributed to the variety of print media compared to audio and visual media within the sample which accounted for half of the number of expressions in the sample. Audio media ranked third in terms of the use of hate speech and incitement to violence with an average use of (14.7%) of the media content and with (13.2%) total contribution to the total use of hate speech and incitement to violence in the sample.

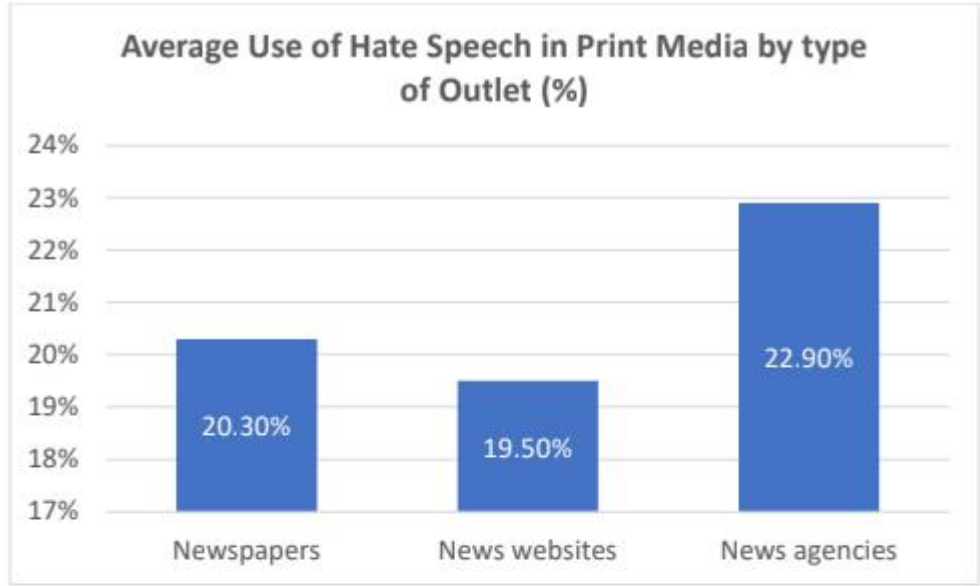
Use of hate speech and incitement to violence within print media

Table 2: Use of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Print Media

| Type of media outlet | Total number of materials monitored | Recurrences of hate speech in the written content | Recurrences of hate speech in visual content | Average use of hate speech (%) | Contribution to the total use of hate speech (%) |
|-----------------------------|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Newspapers | 430 | 77 | 5 | 20.3% | 20.9% |
| News websites | 968 | 181 | 14 | 19.5% | 49.6% |
| News agencies | 564 | 111 | 5 | 22.9% | 29.5% |
| Total | 1962 | 369 | 24 | 20.9% | 100% |

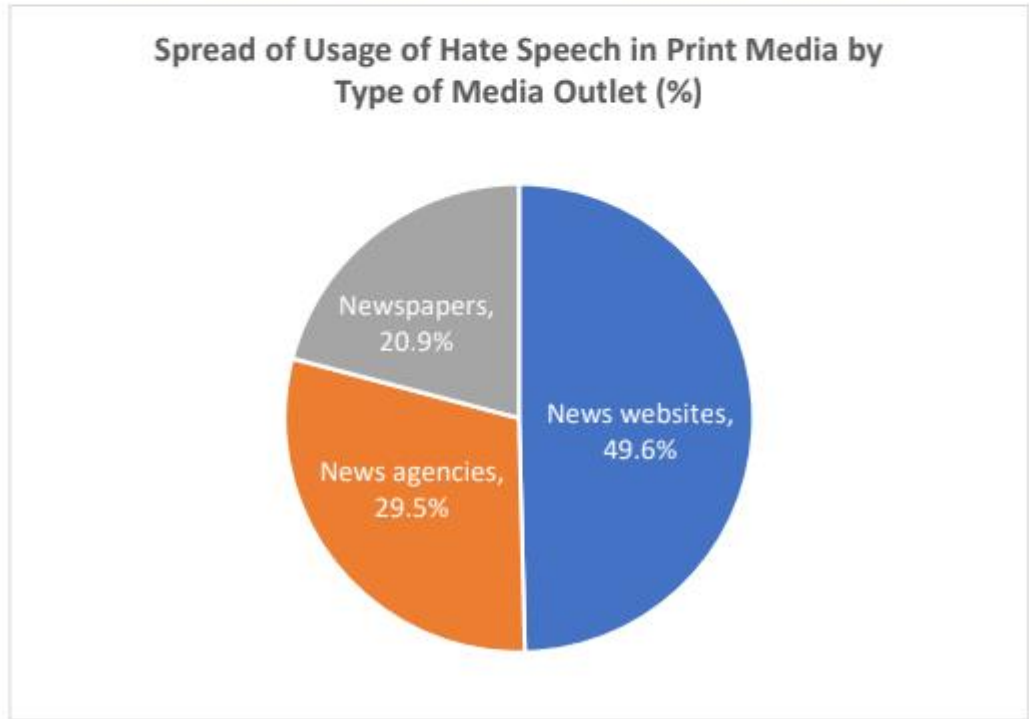
Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Graph 3: Average Use of Hate Speech in Print Media by Type of Outlet (%)



Source: Table 2

Graph 4: Spread of Usage of Hate Speech in Print Media by Type of Media Outlet (%)



Source: Table 2

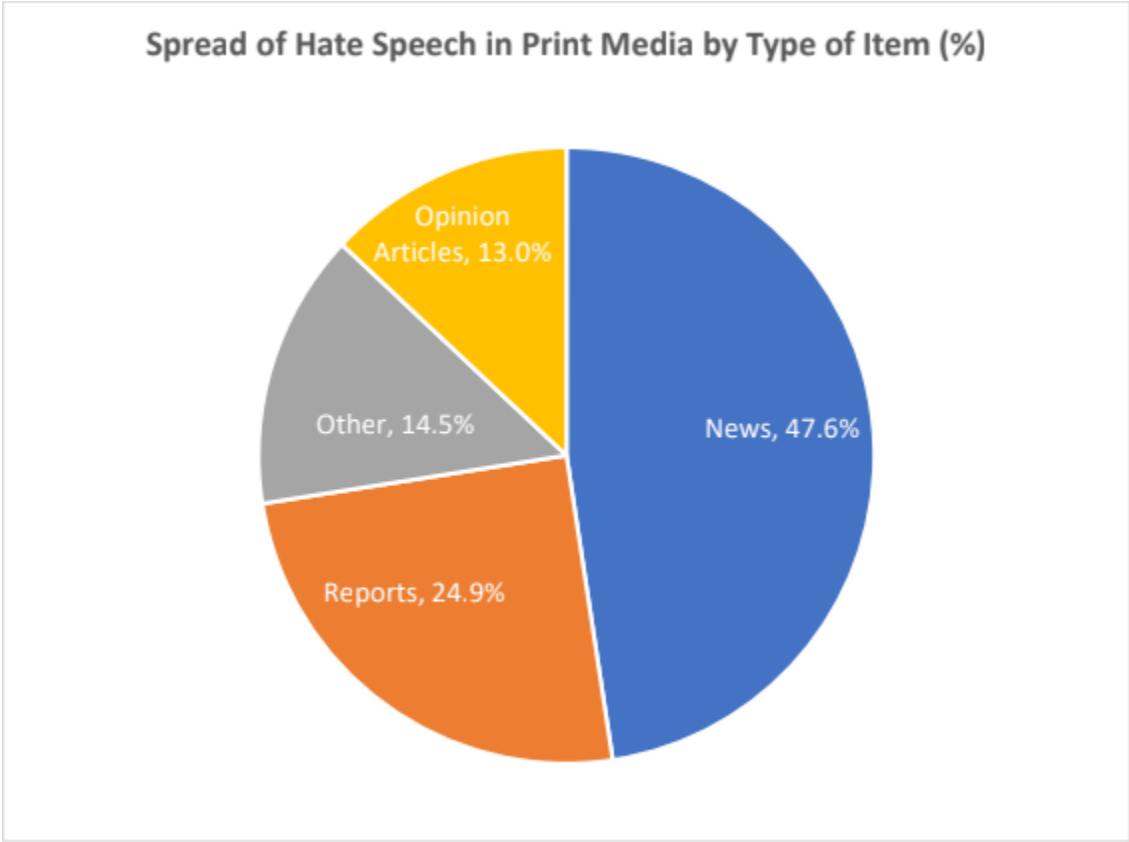
Table (2) shows that the highest percentage of the use of hate speech in print media was done by news agencies with an average use of (22.9%) of the content, and with a total contribution of hate speech and incitement to violence in the sample of (29.5%). Newspapers ranked second with an average use of (20.3%) of the content and with a total contribution in the sample of (20.9%). News websites ranked third

with an average use of (19.5%) of the content presented and with a total use of (49.6%) in the sample, which is the largest percentage due to the number of news websites within the print media sample which is double the number of newspapers and news agencies.

Distribution of hate speech according to media type

Print Media: distribution of hate speech and incitement to violence according to type of print media item was: news (47.6%), reports (24.9%) and op-ed articles (13%) respectively. The remaining was distributed on other types of items.

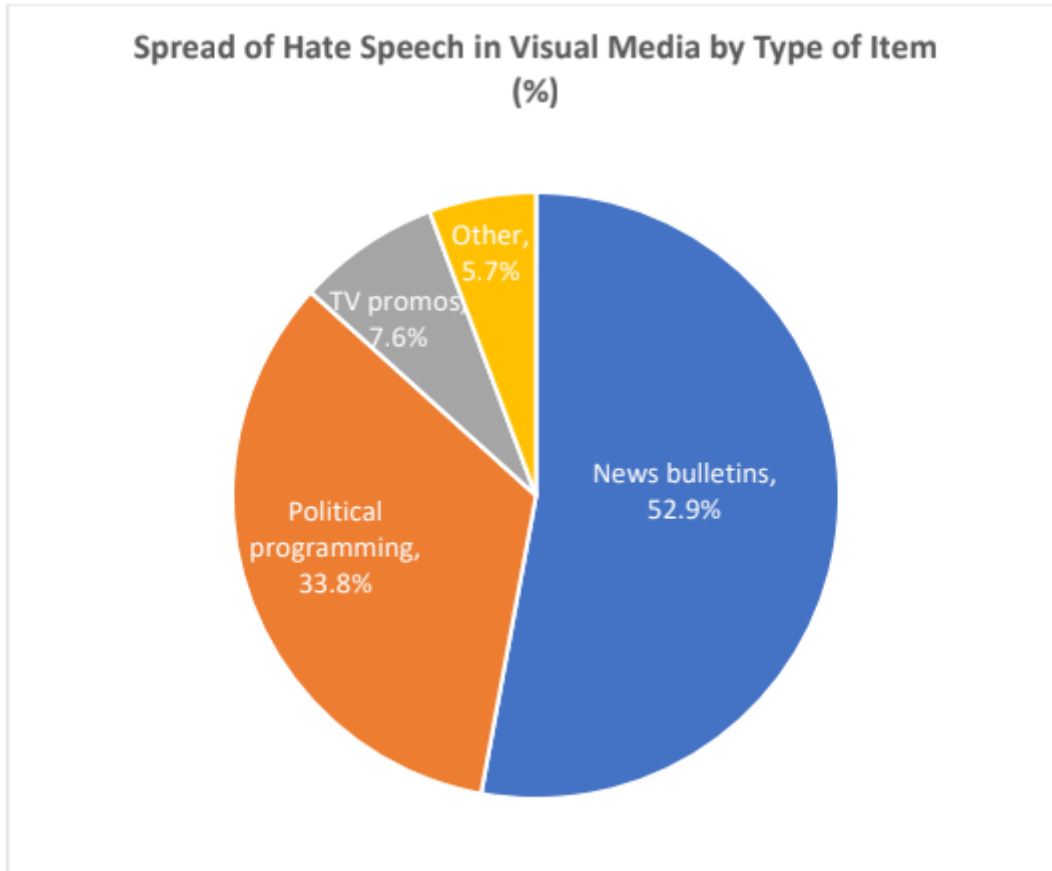
Graph 5: Spread of Hate Speech in Print Media by Type of Item (%)



Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Visual Media: the distribution of hate speech and incitement to violence according to type of visual media item: news bulletins (52.9%), political programs (33.8%), TV promos (7.6%) respectively. The remaining was distributed on other types of items.

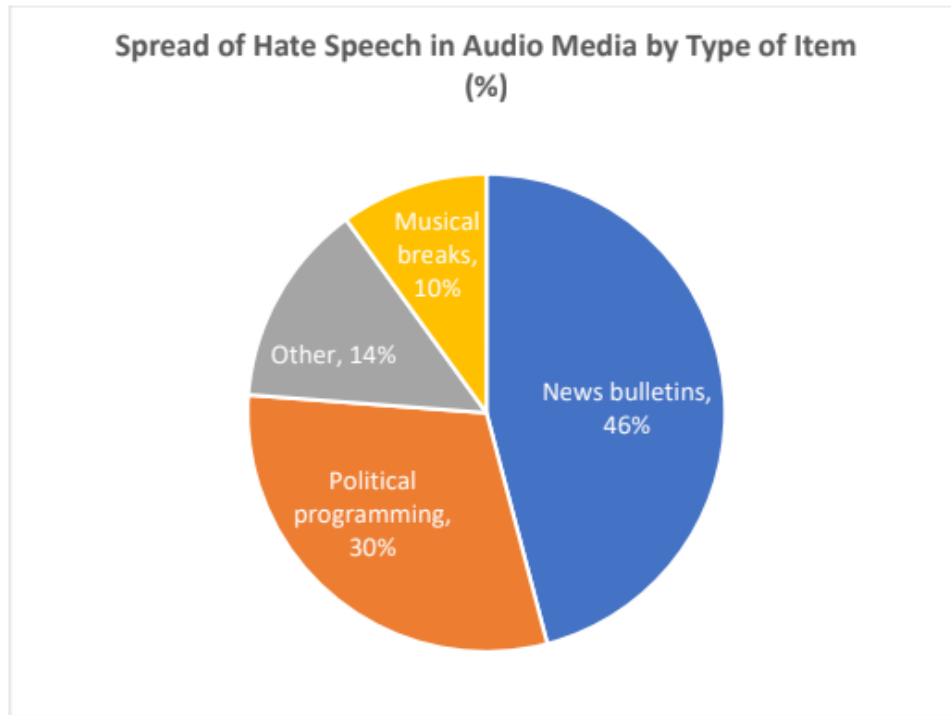
Graph 6: Spread of Hate Speech in Visual Media by Type of Item (%)



Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Audio Media: the distribution of hate speech and incitement to violence according to type of audio media items was: news bulletins (45.9%), political programs (30.3%), musical breaks (10%) respectively. The remaining was distributed on other types of items.

Graph 7: Spread of Hate Speech in Audio Media by Type of Item (%)

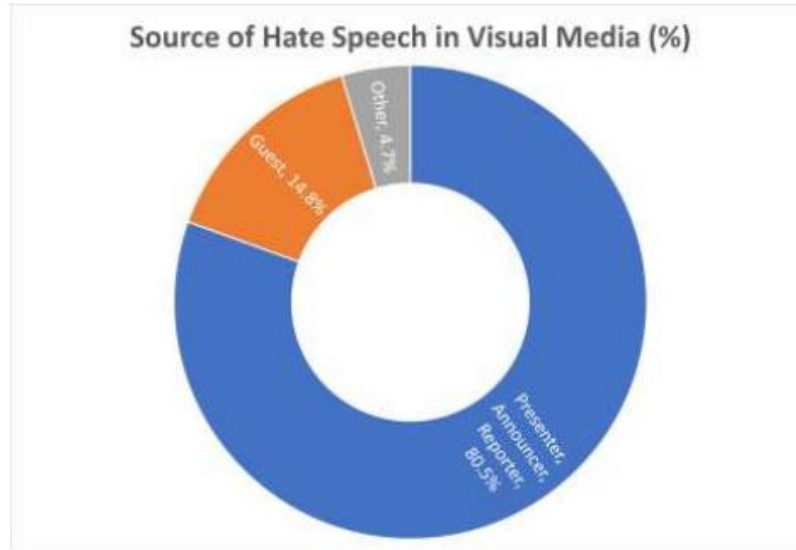


Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

The source of spoken hate speech in visual and audio media

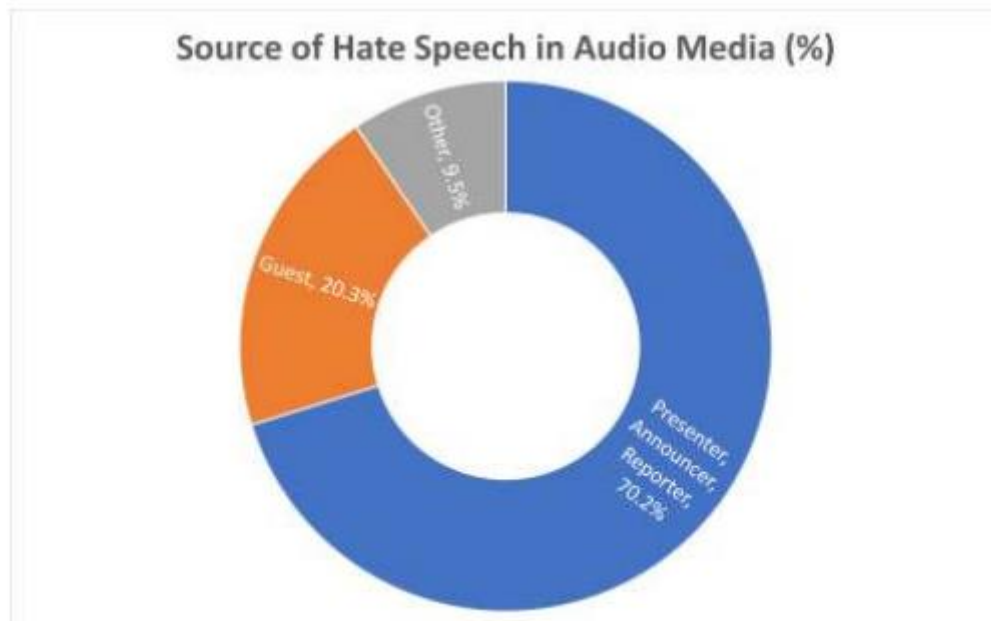
Visual Media: The percentage of the use of hate speech by station guests was (14.8%) of the total spoken hate speech. (80.5%) of hate speech was expressed by the representative of the station (announcer, reporter), the rest was distributed on other sources.

Graph 8: Source of Hate Speech in Visual Media (%)



Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Audio Media: The percentage of the use of hate speech by stations guests was (20.3%) of the total spoken hate speech. (70.2%) of hate speech was expressed by the representative of the station (announcer, reporter), the rest was distributed on other sources.



Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Conclusions deduced from the results

In comparison with results from similar studies and reports that monitored hate speech in Egypt,

Tunisia, Yemen and Lebanon, the average representative sample of hate speech in Syrian media is relatively low; given the nature of the seven-year political and military conflict. This can be explained by the following:

On the scientific level: SCM's hate speech and incitement to violence monitoring report is considered the largest and most comprehensive compared to similar projects in other MENA countries in terms of the number of media outlets monitored, 24 outlets, and in terms of coverage of the sample of the three types of media (read, audio and visual) and political orientations of the outlets (pro-regime, pro- opposition, pro-Kurdish). Similar studies, on the other hand, were limited to monitoring one media outlet, one media type or one political orientation. Therefore, the study sample is considered logical with an average of 24 media outlets of different types and political orientations. The study results could also be generalized and adopted as a percentage of the Syrian media use of hate speech, based on the size of the sample and the percentages of follow-up and dissemination of monitored outlets.

On the political level: The period during which monitoring was conducted was relatively quiet from a military and political perspective. During the monitoring period, no high-level conflict, massacres against civilians or control of new areas took place by any of the parties to the conflict. This, of course, was reflected in the level of use of hate speech in the Syrian media.

Social media: social media activities by media outlets staff were important in contributing to reducing the use of official hate speech content. The widespread of social media use by Syrian media individuals and institutions, created an unofficial channel to use hate speech instead of using official channels. Social media is still relatively uncensored, a fact that requires a separate study due to the importance and widespread spread of social media, and the consequent increased risk of using it for hate speech.

Audience feedback: During the monitoring process, monitors noted that audience interaction through comments on online media content (print, audio, visual), was mostly hate speech and direct

incitement to violence. Although "the nature of the audience's interaction with media content" was not a variable of the study in question, the reference to it seems necessary in this context.

Media content and the percentage of hate speech can contribute to determining the degree of audience interaction with this content and the nature and direction of the interaction. In addition, public comments may constitute a new space for the media to use hate speech and incitement to violence indirectly and unofficially in the content it provides, by taking the responsibility of this speech to the audience through commentaries. Monitors noted that some media outlets did not intervene in deleting comments that contained direct incitement to murder.

Despite the relatively low average use of hate speech and incitement to violence in Syrian media, the ranking of media types according to the most frequently used hate speech, as revealed by the results (visual media, then print media, then audio media), provides a serious indication of the spread of this speech and the rate of its effect on the public. Particularly as the study results conformed with results of previous studies⁴ on the most prevalent and reliable media for Syrian public in areas of control of the government or the opposition. In both areas, television was the most widespread and popular for the public, followed by electronic media, print, then radio.

Results revealed that hate speech and incitement to violence in Syrian media was part of the editorial policy adopted by the outlets, which bear the responsibility for its use. Use of hate speech and incitement to violence was concentrated within the news bulletins and reports in print media, which reflect the outlets' editorial policy, and to a lesser extent in op-ed articles. The same is true for audio media, where the majority of hate speech and incitement to violence was by the channel representatives (announcer, reporter), and less so by guests.

Second Hypothesis

Results confirmed the validity of the second hypothesis, which proposed that there are differences in the extent to which Syrian media use hate speech and incitement to violence, depending on media type and political orientation;

According to media type

Results in Table (1) reveal the validity of the first sub-hypothesis: "There are differences in the extent to which Syrian media use hate speech and incitement to violence, depending on media type (print, audio, visual)." Hate speech was mostly used by visual media, followed by print media then audio media. These differences in hate speech rates of use can be explained by differences in the content of each media style;

visual media is the largest in terms of broadcast content and coverage of events 24 hours, while the content provided by the print media and the coverage of events is less compared to that of visual media. The same applies to radio stations that devote part of their broadcasts to non- political aspects (variety programs, song breaks). In addition, the prevalence and reliability of visual media, which, according to studies, outweighs other media types, makes it more committed to the political line that it represents and shapes its message in line with the audience's political orientation.

According to political orientation

Study results presented in tables (3, 4 and 5) prove the validity of the second sub-hypothesis: "There are differences in the extent to which Syrian media use hate speech and incitement to violence, depending on the political orientation (pro-opposition, pro regime, pro-Kurdish)."

Table (3) shows that the average use of hate speech and incitement to violence was high among the politically orientated pro-regime media, which reached (27.4%) of the total media content provided by these outlets. It also shows that visual media contributed to the majority of the use of hate speech and incitement to violence in media with a contribution rate of (38.1%).

Politically orientated pro-Kurdish media ranked second. Table 4 shows that the average use of the hate speech by Kurdish media reached (25.7%) of the total media content it provides. Similar to pro- regime media, visual media contributed to the majority of the use of hate speech and incitement to violence in Kurdish media, with a rate of (48.7%).

Politically orientated pro-opposition media ranked third with the lowest proportion of hate speech and incitement to violence. Table (5) shows that the average use of hate speech by opposition media reached (14.1%) of the total media content. Table (5) also shows that websites contributed to the majority of hate speech and incitement to violence in opposition media, with a rate of (19.7%).

Table 3: Use of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media Political of Orientation (Pro-Syrian Regime)

| Use of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media Political of Orientation (Pro-Syrian Regime) | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| | Newspapers | News websites | News agencies | Radio | TV | Total % |
| Average use of hate speech (%) | 25.3% | 20.9% | 33.1% | 19.7% | 38.1% | 27.4% |
| Contribution to the total use of hate speech in pro-regime media (%) | 14.4% | 23.8% | 17.3% | 17.3% | 27.2% | 100% |

Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Table 4: Use of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media of Political Orientation (Pro-Kurdish)

| Use of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media Political of Orientation (Pro-Kurdish) | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| | Newspapers | News websites | News agencies | Radio | TV | Total % |
| Average use of hate speech (%) | 22.4% | 18.2% | 29.4% | 9.8% | 48.7% | 25.7% |
| Contribution to the total use of hate speech in Kurdish media (%) | 5.5% | 20.3% | 21.2% | 5.1% | 47.9% | 100% |

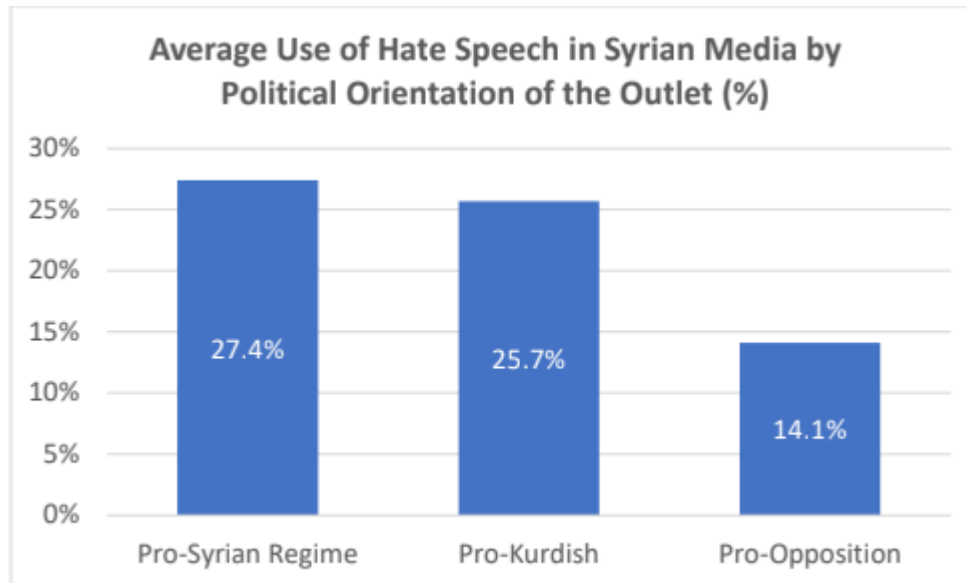
Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Table 5: Use of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media of Political Orientation (Pro-Opposition)

| Use of Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Syrian Media Political of Orientation (Pro-Opposition) | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| | Newspapers | News websites | News agencies | Radio | TV | Total % |
| Average use of hate speech (%) | %13.1 | %19.7 | %6.3 | %12.8 | %18.5 | %14.1 |
| Contribution to the total use of hate speech in opposition media (%) | %14.2 | %40.5 | %7.9 | %16.9 | %20.5 | %100 |

Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Graph 10: Average Use of Hate Speech in Syrian Media by Political Orientation of the Outlet (%)



Source: Tables 3, 4 and 5

Results of the second sub-hypothesis, in relation to political orientation, can be explained as follows:

Centralized media decision making: results revealed that centralized media decision making and the level of unified discourse among media outlets have significant importance in identifying hate speech levels adopted by politically-oriented media outlet. Consequently, use of hate speech can be arranged according to the levels of centralization, which media outlets are subject to within the three political orientations studied, as follows:

Pro-regime media: according to political orientation, pro regime media outlets ranked first in the use of hate speech in the Syrian media. This is explained by the fact that these outlets (both government and private) are subject to a central authority represented by the Ministry of Information with security services behind the scenes. This makes their editorial policies unified, deliberate and focused towards promoting the Syrian regime's political discourse and viewpoints about events in Syria.

Pro-Kurdish media: Kurdish media operating in the self-administered areas are subject to a centralized media authority. Although it is less centralized than the regime, it plays the same role

through the "Culture and Art Commission" in the self-administered areas and affiliated media bodies in the "self-administered districts" responsible for granting media licenses and monitoring media content. This created convergent editorial policies among Kurdish media operating in the self-administered areas, and reflected the viewpoints of the self-administration authority.

Pro-opposition media: opposition media have a wider margin of freedom that is not available to their counterparts in the previous two orientations. This is due to the fact that it is not subject to any central authority that determines its general direction or editorial policy, which gives media outlets the possibility to formulate their discourse quasi-independently and provides greater opportunity to adhere to professionalism and journalism standards.

Media censorship: media censorship is a corollary of the existence of a central authority. Consequently, it affects the level of use of hate speech and incitement to violence in the media that express a particular political orientation. The effect of censorship can be explained as follows:

Legal and security censorship: the presence of legal and security censorship over pro-regime media prevents it from breaking the line prescribed by the central authority. The margin of freedom is also narrow even for private media operating in areas controlled by the Syrian regime as confirmed by the results, which showed a close proportion in the extent of hate speech and incitement to violence in loyal media both (private and government). The average use in government media was (31%), while the average use in private media was (26.9%) of the total content provided by these outlets. The same is true for pro-Kurdish media use of hate speech and incitement to violence, which is a result of the existence of regulatory bodies, which prevent any divergence from official discourse of the self-administration authority and narrows down margins of freedom in the media through practices ranging from censorship of media content to arrest of independent journalists and the closure of media outlets that violate its media line.

Donor censorship: in contrast to pro-regime and pro-Kurdish media censorship, pro-

opposition media have a completely different kind of censorship: donor or supporter censorship. Opposition media rely mostly on the financial support provided by donors represented by international organizations supporting the media, which often link their financial support to adhering with international standards of professional journalism, primarily the obligation not to use hate speech and incitement to violence. It was noted that opposition media backed by international organizations are the least to use hate speech compared with opposition media backed by businessmen. The latter had a relatively higher level of hate speech by virtue of freedom from donors' standards. The same applies to opposition media supported by governments involved in the Syrian conflict.

The most frequently used hate terms in the Syrian media according to political orientation

The most widely used hate speech and incitement to violence vocabulary and phrases in the Syrian media were collected from monitoring forms of different media types (print, audio, visual) and classified according to their political orientation, as appears in the following tables. The context in which each word was mentioned was also considered, where a space was dedicated for the monitor to justify their selection. Therefore, the words in the tables reflect hate speech in the context in which it was used.

Table 6: The Most Frequently Used Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence Terms Used in Syrian Media of Political Orientation (Pro-Regime)

| The Most Frequently Used Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence Terms Used in Syrian Media of Political Orientation (Pro-Regime) | | |
|---|---|--|
| The target group for the speech | Type of speech used | Most used terms |
| Military groups (armed opposition groups) | Stigmatisation Discrimination Incitement to aggression and hatred Urging the use of violence and its justification | Armed groups / terrorists / terrorists groups / armed persons / armed militias / Free Army militia / terrorist factions / Nusra and its brothers/ Dawaesh (to refer to persons as members of ISIS) / terrorist organizations / terrorist gangs / remnants of the terrorists / takfiri terrorist gangs / mercenaries / the enemy / terrorists and their operators / the terrorist drug dealers and outlaws / extremists / cleansing the abomination of terrorism / defeat of terrorism / war on terrorism (in reference to military operations undertaken by the Syrian |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | government forces against the armed opposition) |
| Political groups (opposition) | Stigmatisation, advocating aggression and hatred, incitement of violence and its justification, unjustified and unqualified accusations | Ikhwanji (term used to refer to a member of the Muslim Brotherhood)/ state agents / international tools / tools of Israel / no decision in their power / state arms / operators of agendas |
| Military groups (Kurdish military) | Incitement to aggression and hatred | Asayish militia / Kurdish militias / Kurdish units |
| Geographic area (where opposition armed groups are located) | Incitement to aggression and hatred and urging the use of violence | Terrorist pockets / Terrorist nests / Well of terrorism / terrorist areas |
| Residents of an area | Stigmatisation Incitement to aggression and hatred, urging the use of violence | Cradle of terrorism |
| States involved in supporting the Syrian opposition (Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia) | Stigmatisation, incitement to aggression and hatred, urging the use of violence | Zionist Islam /Regime of the sons of Saudi / the extremist Wahhabi thought / Wahhabi thoughts / Saudi and Gulf money / international operators / terrorist sponsors / the Turkish aggressor / Turkish occupation / the Ottoman invasion |
| Opposition civil society | Advocating aggression and hatred, incitement of violence and its justifications, unjustified and unqualified accusations | Theatrical plays (referring to the incidents where chemical weapons were used) / saboteurs / agents / international tools / the Israeli project / the alleged revolution / the cosmic plot / the White Helmets of Jabhat al-Nusra |

Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Table 7: The Most Frequently Used Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence Terms Used in Syrian Media Political Orientation (Pro-Kurdish)

| The most used terms for hate speech in media - political orientation (pro-Kurdish) | | |
|---|---|--|
| The target group for the speech | Type of speech used | Most used terms |
| Military group | Stigmatisation Discrimination Incitement to aggression and hatred | Nusra and its brothers / Dawaesh / terrorists / terrorist groups / terrorist militias / Sunni terrorism / extremist Sunni thought / Turkey's mercenaries / |
| (Armed opposition groups) | Accusations without justification | mercenaries of terror / jihadists / extremist Islamic militias / ISIS thought / Erdogan's mercenaries Kidnappers of civilians (accusing the opposition) |
| Political group (Syrian opposition, National Kurdish Council) | Insult, stigmatisation, discrimination, advocating for aggression and hatred | Orphans of the opposition / Mercenaries of the outside opposition / traitors / pigs / Erdoganis / racists / tails of the regime / Turkey's agents |
| Political group (Syrian regime) | Stigmatisation Incitement to aggression and hatred | The criminal regime / the Assadist enemy / the Shiite militias (referring to the foreign militias supported by Iran) / the Baathist regime / the Baath authorities / Assad militias |
| Residents of an areas | Stigmatisation Discrimination Incitement to aggression and hatred | Ghouta settlers (referring to forced displaced persons from Eastern Ghouta) / settlement of families of fighters / settlement of Arab families / cradle of terror / occupied areas |
| State (Turkey) | Stigmatisation, incitement to aggression and hatred, urging the use of violence | Turkish fascism / Turkish occupation / the enemy Erdogan / the Turkish colonisation / the Turkish enemy / the Turkish invasion / the Ottoman expansion |
| Ethnic groups (Non-Kurdish Syrian ethnic groups) | Discrimination | Syrian Kurdistan (referring to areas with Kurdish presence in Syria, and its use in the context of the monopolization of these areas and its population for one group only) / cleansing (referring to the military advancement of Kurdish military groups) |

Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Table 8: The Most Frequently Used Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence Terms Used in Syrian Media Political Orientation (Pro-Opposition)

| The Most Frequently Used Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence Terms Used in Syrian Media Political Orientation (Pro-Opposition) | | |
|--|---|--|
| The target group for the hate speech | Type of hate speech used | Most used terms |
| Military group (Syrian government forces) | Stigmatisation Discrimination Incitement to aggression and hatred | The looting regime/ Army of looters / Assad militia / regime militia / sectarian regime militias / Assad's gang / Shabbiha / |
| Political group (Syrian regime) | Stigmatisation Advocating for aggression and hatred | The sinful regime / The criminal regime / the Assadist enemy / the Assadist regime / the Damascus regime / the regime of the animal (referring to the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad) |
| Military group (YPU units) | Stigmatisation Incitement to aggression and hatred | Kurdish militias / Kurdish units / separatist parties / Qasad militias [Qasad is the Arabic abbreviation for the Syria Democratic Forces] / Kurdish forces / PYD militias |
| Civil groups (Supporting the Syrian regime or who work under its umbrella) | Incitement to aggression and hatred, urging the use of violence | Loyalist areas / Baathists / Shabbiha / Assadists Assad institutions (referring to the state institutions of the regime) |
| States of parties involved in supporting the Syrian regime | Stigmatisation, incitement to aggression and hatred, urging the use of violence | Sectarian militias / Shiite militias / party of the devil / Hezb Al-Lat (play on words for Hezbollah, Al-Lat is a name and title used to refer to multiple goddesses worshipped in the ancient Near East) / mercenaries / Palestinian militias |
| Institutions and personalities (opposition institutions, political opposition personalities) | Stigmatisation and incitement to aggression and hatred | Hotel revolutionaries / Emirati tool / man of the Emirates / man of Saudi Arabia / traders of war |

Source: Data from the monitoring phase May 2018

Hate speech in pro regime media

It is clear from Table (6) that the hate speech and incitement to violence in the pro-regime media (government or private owned) is unified towards targeting all forms of the Syrian opposition; political, military and civilian and its regional and international supporters. The speech focuses on stigmatizing the opposition as terrorist groups backed by regional states, which is considered as incitement to hate and justification for the Syrian regime's violence.

This speech reflects the impact of a central authority and control over the media in the Syrian regime. Pro-regime media are committed to the regime's public discourse and its interpretation of what is happening in Syria as a "global conspiracy" and that the war is between "a legitimate government for all Syrians and terrorist groups supported by external players." Therefore, it is noted that hate speech of pro-regime media focuses on Syrian political and military groups and regional states. Pro-regime hate speech and incitement to violence also targets Islamic religious movements and political Islam movements by accusing them of terrorism, such as "Wahhabism" and "Muslim Brotherhood". Moreover, it targets geographically opposed areas by inciting hate and justifying the use of violence against them as "terrorism incubators". The Kurds as an ethnic group, are also targeted using the word "Kurdish militias" to identify the PYD-linked forces. The use of the same hate and incitement to violence vocabulary across pro-regime media indicates the presence of a unified and systematic editorial policy imposed by a higher authority.

Hate speech in pro-Kurdish media

It is clear from Table (7) that the hate speech and incitement to violence in pro-Kurdish media was influenced by two factors:

First, the nationalist ideological dimension, which is obvious in the discrimination and incitement to hate against some sections of Syrian society, through the development of informal Kurdish names for ethnically mixed regions, and by stigmatizing non-Kurds from the displaced in predominantly Kurdish

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areas as "settlers". The effect of this dimension is also obvious in the use of hate speech by pro-Kurdish media and the Syrian regime alike against the Syrian opposition (political and military) according to its position of towards their demands and the "Kurdish issue".

The second factor is the centralization dimension. Although the study sample excluded the official party media, the dominance of the Democratic Unionist Party "PYD" which controls self-administered Kurdish areas was clear over the media outlets operating in those areas, by using hate speech and incitement to violence against other Kurdish political forces opposed to PYD, such as the Kurdish National Council, by stigmatizing them as "traitors" and "agents." The impact of this dimension also reflects the concentration of much of the rhetoric of hate and incitement to violence towards Turkey, the historical enemy of the PYD, and even linking the opposition-oriented rhetoric with Turkey through the use of terms such as "Erdoganis", "Turkish agents" and "Ottoman expansion." In addition, the majority of pro-Kurdish media hate discourse adopts a sectarian approach that is compatible with the PYD's media discourse, which is based on showing it as a moderate, secular party fighting hardline parties. Most pro-Kurdish media use words such as "Sunni terrorism" and "hardline Islamic militias" to stigmatize Syrian armed opposition factions and their political parties, although the Kurdish component in Syrian society belongs in the majority of Sunni doctrine. The use of the same vocabulary of hate speech and incitement to violence is noted across pro-Kurdish media, indicating a semi-unified hate speech issued by a central authority.

Hate speech in pro-opposition media

It is clear from Table (8) that hate speech in opposition media is mainly targeted at the Syrian regime with its military and political institutions. The monitored Syrian pro-opposition media focused their discourse on what they consider to be the real root of the crisis that the country is living. It is a people's revolution against a political regime, not a civil war between the components of the Syrian people. This is evidenced by the use of sectarian hate speech by opposition media against Iran and its forces in Syria, and not against the components of the Syria people, through the use of vocabulary such as "Shiite militias" and "sectarian militias" to stigmatize foreign forces backed by Iran. Pro-opposition media also demonstrate hate speech

and incitement to violence targeting civilian groups that support the Syrian regime and areas controlled by the regime; using hate words such as "Assadis", "loyalist regions", "Baathists". In addition, the pro-opposition media was noted to have hate speech and incitement to violence influenced by the positions of the countries supporting the Syrian opposition, such as Turkey and Qatar. Hate speech in such situations targeted the anti-Turkey PYD forces using terms such as "Kurdish militias" and "separatist militias". This discourse, influenced by the positions of the supporters of the Syrian opposition, goes beyond the local level by targeting regional players through the use of terms such as "an Emirati instrument" and "Saudi man". Pro-opposition media hate speech and incitement to violence also targeted opposition figures or institutions through unwarranted accusations like "hotel revolutionaries" and "war lords." It can be said that hate speech and incitement to violence in the opposition media is unified only in targeting the Syrian regime and its various institutions, but it is dispersed against the rest of other parties due to division of the Syrian opposition and its currents, as well as, the positions of the regional supporters.

Conclusions Inferred from Analysis of Hate Speech Usage in Syrian

Media

By reviewing the targeted groups of hate speech and incitement to violence in Syrian media across its political orientations (pro regime, pro-opposition, pro-Kurdish), an important conclusion can be deduced: this discourse is mostly aimed at political groups, not ethnic or sectarian sections of Syrian society, indicating that this speech is the result of the seven-year ongoing war in the country. It does not carry historical hatred dimensions between sections of Syrian society. Therefore, a political solution to end the military conflict and development of national transitional justice, will significantly reduce the use of hate speech and incitement to violence in Syrian media of different political orientations.

On the other hand, the continuation of Syrian media to use hate speech and incitement to violence will contribute to perpetuate hostility and hatred in the recipient Syrian minds in the event of continued military conflict in the country for years. This may contribute to fueling conflicts on ethnic or sectarian grounds after the end of the political conflict. The state of hatred

among sections of Syrian society resulting from the use of hate speech and incitement to violence in Syrian media could also have an impact on the future political solution. It can negatively impact affect the possibility of coexistence between them and push towards reprisals, which threatens to facilitate acceptance of dividing the country, or encourage the production of a political system based on sectarian and ethnic quotas, similar to Lebanon or Iraq.

Recommendations

Controlling hate speech and incitement to violence in a complex and interlocking conflict, such as the Syrian conflict is a thorny issue that requires long-term organized efforts. Due to the gravity of the spread of this discourse, given its potential long-term effects and based on the findings of the study, SCM recommends the following:

On the academic level: This study falls under the category of foundation and exploratory studies, which paves the way for the establishment of a new research field in the Syrian media studies. Therefore, it is necessary to build upon this research and to support studies and academic research in this field to support it in several directions, including: measuring the impact of the political situation on the increasing level of hate speech in Syrian media. In addition, studying hate speech and incitement to violence in social media, as well as opinion leaders, looking into the behavior of the media in its interaction with public comments that carry hate speech and direct incitement to violence, formulate clear mechanisms to control and deal with them and with other topics that characterize the Syrian media crisis, in preparation for finding well-studied scientific solutions.

To Syrian media: demand Syrian media that use hate speech to reduce its rate of using it according to several conditions including:

- Communicate with media outlets that were monitored and informing them of the research findings, including the percentages of the use of hate speech, the most frequently used hate words and draw their attention to the danger of using such speech and its potential impact on targeted audiences, which form parts of Syrian society.
- Hold training workshops for the media in question, especially for editors and editors-in-

chief in order to make them aware of the dangers of hate speech and its effects, and how to avoid it through training to raise professionalism and efficiency.

- Extract a summary of the most frequently used hate expressions in the Syrian media, found by the study, in a dictionary or booklet that contains those expressions and alternative synonyms devoid of hate speech, which will help formulate an editorial policy that is as free as possible from hate speech.
- Attempt to push to bring together journalists from various political orientations into workshops that bring viewpoints together, ease tensions and push for the formulation of collective press charters that contribute to reducing hate speech in the Syrian media as a whole.
- Issue an annual report that monitors hate speech and its usage in Syrian media, which will contribute to the formation of some kind of censorship in these outlets.

Annex Study Sample

I- Selection criteria

The Study is based on monitoring hate speech and incitement to violence in selected Media during two weeks, and divided into two phases (one week each). The project sample is composed of 24 units representing different forms of Syrian media. The sample selection was based on the following criteria:

1. Syrian identity: The selected media must be Syrian (management, targeted audience and content related to Syrian affairs). But it does not necessarily have to be based in Syria.

2. Representativity: The selection represents different orientations in Syrian society during conflict; therefore the sample includes media that represent the main political orientations: the regime, the opposition, Kurdish.

3. Diversity:

- ☐ Type: Press, radios, TVs, News websites, News agencies.
- ☐ Content: News, reportage, articles, opinion, caricature, angle, dialogue, talk shows, field coverage.
- ☐ Language: Arabic, Kurdish.

4. Reach: One of the main criteria used for sample selection. Especially in this period where the Syrian media witnesses an unprecedented surge. The number of media has exploded rendering it sometimes hard to list all of them. A number of indicators were used to confirm reach within the Syrian audience (views and interactions). These indicators are:

Statistical indicators: (number of visits, viewing rates, interaction rates, ranking on specialized ranking and statistics websites for web media).

Published studies: research and reports.

Nominations by experts in media.

The following cases were excluded:

- ☐ Media that identifies itself officially as representing a certain political party, a religious group or military faction.
- ☐ Media specialized in one field (medical, artistic or technological).
- ☐ When there is no access to a recorded version of its content, since this renders the process difficult (monitoring and verification).

In case the media has multiple forms (a website, a radio and a TV), one form only was chosen assuming it represented the institution and its editorial plan.

Based on these criteria, 24 Syrian Media were selected and grouped as follows:

| | Media with orientations with the regime | Media with orientations with the opposition | Kurdish-language media |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Radio | ☐ <i>Sham FM</i> ☐ <i>Izaat Dimashq</i> | ☐ <i>Souriali</i> ☐ <i>Radio Rozana</i> | ☐ <i>Arta FM</i> ☐ <i>Welat FM</i> |
| TV | ☐ <i>Syrian News Channel</i> ☐ <i>Sama TV</i> | ☐ <i>Orient TV</i> ☐ <i>Halab Today TV</i> | ☐ <i>Ronahî TV</i> ☐ <i>Alyoum TV</i> |
| News website | ☐ <i>Snacksyrian</i> ☐ <i>Al Watan</i> | ☐ <i>Zaman Al Wasl</i> ☐ <i>Baladi News</i> | ☐ <i>Rok Online</i> ☐ <i>Aso Network</i> |
| Websites of Printed Press | ☐ <i>Al Thawra</i> | ☐ <i>Enab Baladi</i> | ☐ <i>Buyer Press</i> |
| News agencies | ☐ <i>Sana News Agency</i> | ☐ <i>Smart News Agency</i> | ☐ <i>Hawar News</i> |