# Online Racism in the Coronavirus Crisis

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THE ONLINE HATE PREVENTION INSTITUTE
*Empowering communities, organisations and agencies in the fight against hate.*

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# Let’s start with some data…

# E.g. 1: Chinese as the enemy [1]

- It uses a single incident to make a racist generalisation
  - "Typical greedy and selfish behaviour by the Chinese"
- It sets up "them" as threat to "us"
  - "They take everything that belongs to us"
- It emphasises the threat and dehumanises the people
  - "Constantly… essential items… like a swarm of locusts"

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- The group posting this has been around since 2009 and sees itself as the Australian part of Europe's Nationalist movements, going so far as to note how they adopted their "black bloc look" from "fellow nationalists in Europe".[2]
- The groups has a history of hate against Asians [2], Muslims[3], and Jews [4].

# E.g. 2: Attacking Mosques [5]

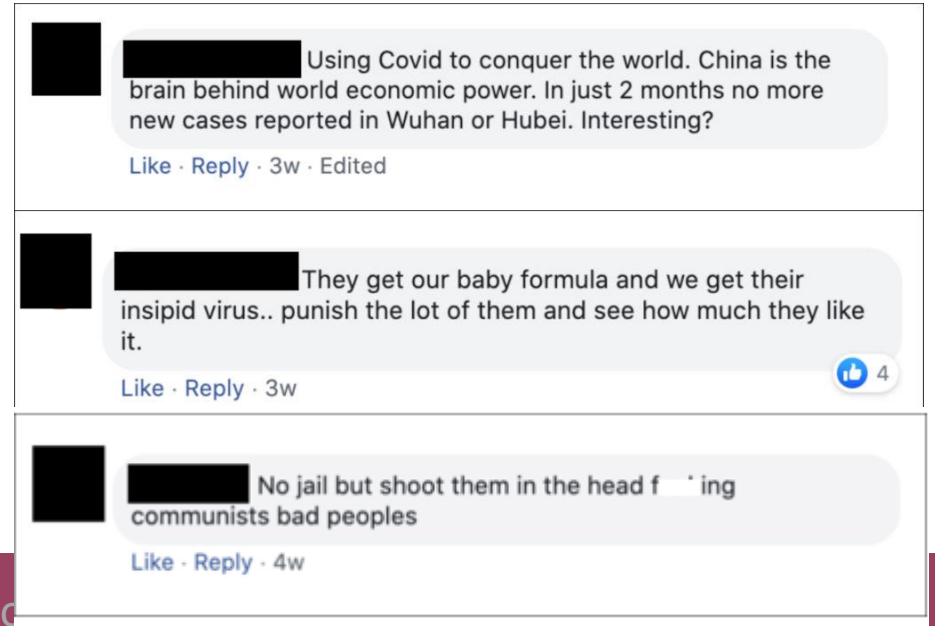
- Anti-Muslim Facebook pages have been sharing stories alleging mosques remain open either in defiance of closure orders or with special exceptions.
- The top story refers to a NY mosque.  It was in a building serving as the base for a food drive (providing an essential service). It closed inline with New York's emergency orders on April 22nd, prior to this being posted.[6]
- The bottom story is from Toronto where the restrictions allowed up to 50 people to gather for prayers. While many places of worship closes, others (from all faiths) remained open, operating within restrictions.

- These posts, on dedicated anti-Muslim pages, sought to use the Coronavirus as a new way of generating hate against the Muslim community. Such content offers a way for these pages to try remain relevant and draw in a larger audience.
- Some content is flagged as fake news on Facebook.

# E.g. 3: Targets of convenience [7]

- The page “Australians against Sharia 2” is an Anti-Muslim page which was previously closed by Facebook.
- It typically posts news stories where a Muslim person is portrayed negatively.
- It’s lately started posting in a similar way on China / Chinese people.
- Two examples of its posts and some comments made on other posts are shown.

- The addition of a China / Chinese focus by dedicated anti-Muslim pages is a reuse of social media infrastructure allowing new forms of hate to spread more rapidly.



# E.g. 4: Antisemitism

- Antisemitic conspiracy theories are being updated to blame Jews for creating COVID-19 [8][9][10]
- The theories accuse Jews of creating the virus to harm China, decrease population and profit from the harm that is caused. Some suggest high infection rates among Jews in New York are intentional, to better spread the virus.[10]
- This antisemitism is appearing mostly in the far right, ultra-conservative Christian circles, Islamist groups and to a lesser extent in the far-left.[11]

- This is an adaptation of older conspiracy theories, e.g. from the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The tweet from David Duke (former KKK leader) explicitly focuses on conspiracies of Jewish control of media and government.
- There is a history of Jews being blamed mass outbreaks of disease which goes back to the middle ages. This too is being revived in online messages in multiple languages and countries.[12]

# E.g. 5 The Boogaloo Movement [13][14]

- In the United States there has been a rapid growth of a pre-existing “revolutionary movement” which started in 4chan, largely as a joke.
- It turned serious and has been latched onto by racists (specifically white supremacists) as a new approach to their calls for a race war, and by others who oppose racism.
- Both sides oppose government actions which restrict individuals on public health grounds. Armed efforts to disrupt law enforcement are being regularly organised.
- We have found that on Facebook the Boogaloo Movement is anti-racist, suggesting efforts to drive off white supremacists have largely worked – though they just moved to other platforms.

# Bottom line

- Messages of distrust, division and blame are circulating
- This is impacting social cohesion
- It will play in the background when people come under economic stress
- Organised hate groups are growing are more time is spent online
- The hate groups are adapting to draw in large audiences, but also seeking to infect people they draw in with hate of their primary targets
- In some places and for some individuals there is an increase risk of this indoctrination leading to radicalisation and violent extremism

# References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# Commissioner Chin Tan

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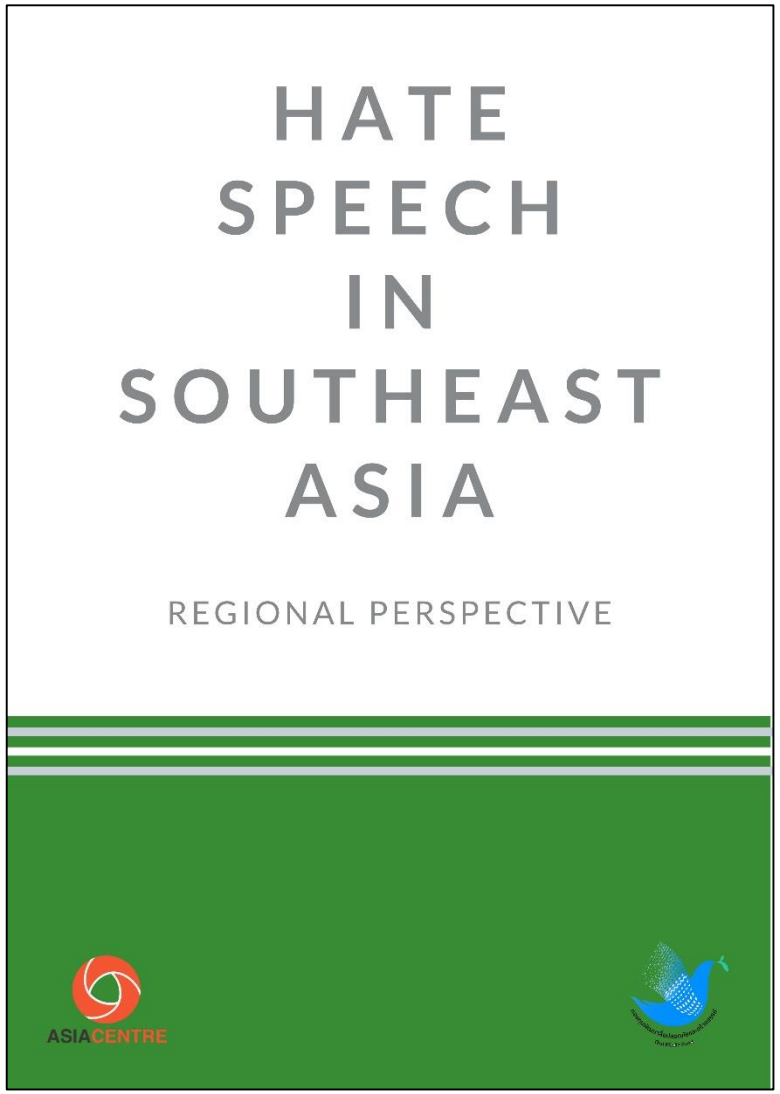


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# Definition of Hate Speech

- No international definition
- UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech:  ‘Any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor’
- International law prohibits ‘the incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence’.
- Southeast Asia criminalize incitement incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence.

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# Contextualising Hate Speech in SEA

- Colonial Period: Transboundary Movements, Sedition Act
- Post-Colonial Era: Nation-Building Projects, Homogenizing Strategies
- Further Diversification - Migrant Workers, Refugees, 1B1R
- Health Crisis: SARs, H5N1 (Avian [Bird] Flu), COVID-19

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# HATE SPEECH IN ASEAN

## 4 FORMS OF HATE SPEECH

Race and Religion

Foreign Nationals, Migrant Workers, and Refugees

Political Ideology and Values

Sexual Minorities

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# Legal Measures

- Harmony Bills and Commissions
- Use of Existing Law – Penal Code, Computer Crime Act/ Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law
- COVID-19 related Laws

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# HATE SPEECH IN ASEAN

## POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- Government Agencies and Mechanisms
- Language Policy for Indigenous Community
- Ethnic and Racial Policies
- Policies Against the LGBT Community
- Guidelines for Religious Practices
- Integration Activities

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# HATE SPEECH IN ASEAN

## INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (ICERD)

### Signatories

- PHILIPPINES (1967)
- INDONESIA (1999)
- LAOS (1974)
- THAILAND (2003)
- VIETNAM (1982)
- TIMOR LESTE (2003)
- CAMBODIA (1983)
- SINGAPORE (2017)

### Non-Signatories

- BRUNEI
- MALAYSIA
- MYANMAR

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# HATE SPEECH IN ASEAN

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Primary

Broaden the definition of hate speech beyond race and religion.

Recognise hate speech based on nationality, immigration status, political values, sexual-orientation and others.

### Secondary

Adopt this broad definition of hate speech into law, policy, practice and in international obligations.

Together, this should address discrimination and incitement to hate which should be investigated and adjudicated independently.

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# Questions & Discussion

# Thank you