

Address to UN Minority Forum on Hate Speech

19 November 2020

The UNPO is a membership-based organization of minorities, indigenous communities and other politically marginalized groups from around the world seeking the effective realization of their rights to self-determination.

Hate speech has long been an issue of concern for UNPO members. Many of them are routinely publicly attacked for celebrating their linguistic, religious or ethnic cultures because of distrust of societal diversity amongst dominant groups.

In many of the societies where UNPO members live, social media is one of the primary sources of both communication and news. And it has become a breeding ground for hate.

Last month, the UNPO released a report, *Unrepresented and Alone: The Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Unrepresented Nations and Peoples*. Amongst other findings, the report identified that that across the world, in all continents, unrepresented people have been scapegoated for the pandemic. Underlying prejudices against linguistic, ethnic and religious difference have been inflamed across social media.

As the report shows, online hate speech is a widespread, global phenomenon that becomes particularly dangerous in times of crisis. It needs to be urgently addressed.

Nonetheless, we want to provide a note of caution.

Today we have submitted an in-depth study into the use of hate speech in Spain against the Catalan minority. The report highlights that, just like with other UNPO members around the world, the Catalan minority in Spain are widely subjected to hate speech online.

The report notes, however, that strong hate speech legislation in Spain has been used not to protect the Catalan minority, but rather to intimidate and prosecute Catalans working for the right to self-determination.

This phenomenon is not limited to Spain. Much like with anti-terrorism legislation earlier in this Century, we are noticing many instances of states overusing hate speech legislation to target for political purposes speech that in no way relates to hate speech.

We encourage this forum to take this factor into account in its concluding report and recommendations.

Thank you.