

Introduction to the special issue on the politics of hate: community, societal and global responses

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Introduction

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This special issue is brought to you at a time of increasingly uncertain global politics whereby concerns about hate crime and prejudice are a pressing social and political issue. Across the world there continues to be unprecedented levels of refugees displaced from their homes through conflict or persecution including those from Syria, Afghanistan, African, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia amongst others.¹ We are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record. Around the world, 68.5 million people have been forcibly displaced. That's the most since World War II, according to the [U.N. Refugee Agency](#) (UNHCR). Most people remain displaced within their home countries, but about 25.4 million people worldwide have fled to other countries as refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18. There are also an estimated 10 million stateless people who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement².

This comes at a time when the terms refugee, asylum seeker and migrants have become merged and political and media rhetoric has depicted those affected as 'other' and unwanted (Banks 2012).³⁴ As a result we have seen a growth in human rights abuses⁵ as in Russia⁶

¹ www.unhcr.org/uk/news/briefing/2018/1/5a6701184/car-displacement-reaches-unprecedented-levels-2017.html

² www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html

³ <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/editorials/italy-election-results-populism-resurgence-europe-anti-eu-silvio-berlusconi-5-star-movement-luigi-di-a8240861.html>

⁴ Unmasking deviance: The visual construction of asylum seekers and refugees in English national newspapers. *Critical Criminology*, 20(3), pp.293-310.

⁵ <https://investigaterussia.org/human-rights-abuses>
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/russian-federation/report-russian-federation/>

⁶ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/russia-ukraine-crimea-putin-human-rights-abuses-un-accusations-claims-a7421406.html>

whilst elsewhere supposedly liberal countries disengaging with human rights laws⁷ and international treaties as agreements as shown in Brexit and debate around scrapping the Human Rights Act in the UK leading to substantial hate crime rises.⁸ This is part of a global rise in populist politics and right wing politics including an increase in the far right movement feeding xenophobia through a distrust of migrant and refugees⁹. Alongside this there have been steep rises in Islamophobia¹⁰ fuelled in large part by ideology and political developments including Trump's Muslim Ban.¹¹ Hate manifests itself in individual incidents of street violence; verbal abuse and desecration of religious sites on a local level. Nationally and internationally we have seen media demonization, bans on veiling, religious profiling, restrictions on religious buildings, employment discrimination, criminalization, and programmes against Muslims in the USA, Australia, the Central African Republic, India, Myanmar, Russia, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere, often with state complicity. These are the practical manifestations of the political and cultural functions of Islamophobia over the last two decades.¹²

In addition to this there have been hate crime rises against disabled people fuelled in part by policies and media coverage¹³ which serves to 'scapegoat' them as benefits scroungers¹⁴ within the few countries that includes disability as a hate crime category.

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/may/10/conservatives-to-push-forward-on-manifesto-and-scrap-human-rights-act>

⁸ Hate crime rises after EU Referendum <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38976087>, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/sep/07/hate-surged-after-eu-referendum-police-figures-show>

⁹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/fear-of-migrants-feeds-growth-of-italy-s-far-right-1.3393398>

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¹³ Rise in disability hate crimes uk scrounger rhetoric https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/disability-hate-crime-reports-increase-53-home-office_uk_59e60f9ee4b0a2324d1df159

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/jul/22/combat-disability-hate-crime-understand-people-commit>

It follows therefore that the efforts of those working in the field of hate crime as scholars and in public policy roles become ever more important. Good examples of combined efforts in Europe include the work of the EU and its Member States in making these crimes more visible and holding perpetrators to account by unmasking the bias motivation behind criminal offences and to improve recording practices which includes FRA's work¹⁵ in documenting the extent of prejudice against groups such as Roma, LGBT, Muslims, and migrant communities and the High Level Group on combating racism and xenophobia including that on-line by working with civic society organisations and communities. Other examples include the EUs work on developing a Code of Conduct for social media sites including Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter for regulating hate speech on-line.¹⁶ Grassroots politics to combat prejudice are also increasingly important¹⁷; an example of which can be seen in the Metoo movement¹⁸ and the introduction of Misogyny Hate Crime Policy by Nottinghamshire Police in the UK¹⁹ following research by a civic organisation in the county.²⁰

This special issue focuses on responses to hate crime and offers an excellent collection of papers which provide much needed perspectives on how states can and should respond to hate crime. In his paper on combating xenophobia towards migrants, William Arrocha discusses the timely concern of violence and hate directed towards refugees in the global north. He argues that the humanitarian crisis which has caused millions to flee their homes is often met with a lack of sympathy and in fact political and popular discourse which frames them as problematic. As such, Arrocha argues for compassionate migration in order to foster empathy and to better understand the crisis facing migrants rather than making them subjects of hatred and hostility. His is a timely and important paper. Azra Junuzovic similarly addresses the importance of understanding the political will for change in the context of government action. The paper focuses more specifically on the role of international

¹⁵ fra.europa.eu/en/theme/hate-crime

¹⁶ "[Code of conduct on countering illegal hate speech online](#)"

¹⁷ <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2017/8/22/international-islamophobia-calls-for-a-global-grassroots-resistance>

¹⁸ <https://www.marieclaire.co.uk/opinion/me-too-hashtag-544974>

¹⁹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-nottinghamshire-36788697/misogyny-is-now-a-hate-crime>

²⁰ <https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/local-news/huge-survey-hate-crime-nottingham-1549570>

organisations in addressing hate crime, including the relevance of internal factors such as pressure from civil society groups. In recent years we have seen increasing international efforts to combat hate crime and Junuzovic provides a much needed examination of how these might really influence change. Fundamentally this means international organisations exercise greater evaluation of their own effectiveness by sharing good practice and work more closely with civil society organisations. It is the issue of co-operation that Mike Whine then addresses in his paper. Taking the requirements on European states to combat hate crime as his starting point, he then critically examines the need for criminal justice agencies and civil society to work together. Whine offers his analysis from the perspective of someone who has worked within NGO's for many years and as such is grounded in experience. By using specific case studies for illustration he demonstrates how the expertise and knowledge the civil society can offer is central in responding to hate crime.

Paper four by Piotr Godzisz also looks at government responses but from the perspective of LGBT policy specifically. He shifts our gaze away from the west to look at Balkan countries and asks why hate crime laws are passed but then rarely used. Godzisz observes that often legislation is changed as part of the democratization process but without resources and favourable sentiments at the more local level, provisions are not successfully utilised. The paper continues the themes of the previous papers in the special issue by drawing on themes of co-operation and the multiple layers needed for hate crime to be combated successfully. Just as Godzisz examines countries where laws are passed as part of a wider international picture, the final paper by Schweppe and Haynes looks at a country without hate crime legislation. By drawing on an analysis of Parliamentary debates they demonstrate the importance of understanding the Irish "anomaly" which needs to be understood in the context of the current political landscape. Furthermore, they note the ways in which civil society organisations can have an influence by shaping debates around which victim groups to include. In the end these discussions limited the passage of hate crime legislation.