

PERMANENT REFERENCE



**A STUDY ON THE LEGAL REGULATION OF HATE
SPEECH IN SRI LANKA**

By

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ABSTRACT

Hate speech is one of the most significant threats to peace, security and the rights of people in any society. It has devastating impacts even in Sri Lanka. Speech that is hateful is not a new development, though. It is a phenomenon that has received the attention of different persons and sources, ranging from ancient religious leaders to modern international and domestic legal enactments. In the contemporary age, with technological advancements, hate speech has become a more direct threat to the lives of people unlike ever before. However, combatting hate speech has remained a serious challenge for many societies. This research study examines the phenomenon of hate speech, especially in the Sri Lankan context. It is a legal study which examines the nature and form of hate speech, its impact and how the law has been, and can be, effectively used to combat hate speech. As a qualitative study, it examines a number of published works, including international and domestic laws relevant to combatting hate speech. It also engages in a comparative study, examining the laws of the United Arab Emirates, which is a unique example of a jurisdiction that has enacted comprehensive laws to combat hate speech. The study argues that hate speech, while being a significant threat, cannot be adequately combatted through the existing legal framework in Sri Lanka. The legal response to hate speech will be successful if laws are promulgated to combat hate speech, without encroaching on the rights and freedoms of people. This study, therefore, proposes the need for a comprehensive legal enactment which combats hate speech. In this regard, a draft enactment is produced as a humble contribution to the existing jurisprudence on the topic.