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Online Othering: Religious and Sectarian Intolerance in Jordan's Digital Sphere

Content warning: This report contains mentions and examples of hateful content which some readers may find distressing.

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Executive Summary

This report is part of a research series seeking to understand how online polarisation manifests in Jordan to help inform both local and national policy and practice. The first report in this series analysed misogynistic speech online in Jordan while the second focused on national identity. This report analyses religious and sectarian hate speech on Jordanian social media, while also focusing on othering, demeaning or insulting language.

Using census data, the report concentrates on religions represented in Jordan and explores intra-Jordanian sectarianism online. Jordan is host to faith communities representative of Sunnis, Shia, Christians and Druze. The interplay between these communities online appears to surface significant, yet, limited, targeted hate and harassment.

To that end, the ISD team collected data via Brandwatch on religious and sectarian hate speech on X (formerly Twitter) through a list of hateful keywords between September 2024 and September 2025. Based on a review of all posts/comments, 7 percent were determined to meet ISD's definition of hate speech, while more than 16 percent were found to contain othering, demeaning or insulting language. In addition to the use of Brandwatch data, ISD researchers conducted ethnographic research on YouTube. The addition of YouTube expanded the research parameters to include other platforms with video content.

Content analysis found that Shia Muslims were the most common targets, followed by Druze. Hate speech towards these communities contained threatening and dehumanising language as well as incitement to violence. These groups, along with Christians, were subjected to exclusionary language, such as being designated traitorous, and were excommunicated through the practice of takfir. They were also derogatorily referred to as majus, rawafed (plural of rafidi) and najis.

The findings demonstrate how regional political instability, conflicts and local identity tensions amplify online sectarian discourse. Recommendations to address these issues include digital awareness campaigns and recommendations for platform moderation gaps.

Key Findings

- The posts/comments classified as meeting the ISD definition of hate speech reflected pre-existing sectarian or exclusionary sentiments that were amplified by regional events over the past year, including the Israeli war on Gaza since October 2023, the military escalation between Israel and Iran in June 2025 and the Suweyda violence in July 2025.
- Data collected from X yielded a total of 3,430 posts and comments shared between September 2024 and September 2025. Of these posts, 7.3 percent were classified as containing hate speech, 16 percent were identified as edge cases, and 76.7 percent did not meet the criteria for either category.
- Analysis shows that a breakdown of the total amount of posts meeting ISD's definition of hate speech 250 posts/comments (7.3 percent of the total collected) is highest towards Shia at 60 percent followed by the Druze community at 18 percent, followed by Sunnis at 10 percent, Christians at 10 percent, Muslims (as an independent keyword) is 2 percent, Alawis at 0.8 percent, Sufis at .8 percent, and Bahais at 0.4 percent.
- Hate speech towards Shia and Druze contained explicit threats and incitement to violence, echoing sentiments of extermination, murder and slaughter. These findings indicate that regional conflicts act as catalysts, amplifying both overt hate speech and subtler forms of exclusionary discourse online.
- In line with the above, edge cases towards these sects were othering, derogatory or demeaning language, including slurs and personal attacks such as majus, zindiq and rafidi. The prevalence and intensity of these terms increased notably towards Shia and Druze communities following the Suweyda violence and the Israel-Iran military escalation.
- The breakdown of edge cases (550 posts/comments or 16 percent of the total collected) were othering, derogatory, demeaning and insulting in nature and were highest towards Shia at 76 percent, followed by Druze at 10.7 percent, Sunnis at 4.5 percent, Muslims at 3.1 percent, Christians at 2.9 percent, Sufis at 1.3 percent and Alawis and Bahais at fewer than 1 percent.

Glossary

- **Edge cases:** Posts/comments containing content with language that is othering, derogatory, demeaning or insulting, but does not cross the threshold of hate speech.
 - **Hate speech:** ISD understands hate speech to be any activity or content which seeks to dehumanise, demonise, harass, threaten or incite violence against an individual or community on the basis of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, sex, disability, migrant status or religion.
 - **Majus:** An old Arabic term for Zoroastrians, followers of the ancient Persian religion. While originally neutral, in some modern contexts it can carry a derogatory meaning when used as a sectarian slur against certain Muslim groups, particularly Shi'a.
 - **Zindiq:** A historical term used to describe someone accused of heresy or atheism, often referring to those who deviated from the dominant religious doctrine.
 - **Salafis:** Advocates of a conservative Islamic movement that seeks to match the practices of the earliest generations of Muslims (the Salaf). They emphasise a literal interpretation of the Quran and Hadith and often reject later religious innovations.
 - **Wahhabis:** Followers of an Islamic reform movement founded by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab in 18th-century Arabia. Wahhabism advocates a strict form of monotheism and is closely associated with the religious establishment of Saudi Arabia.
 - **Dehumanisation:** The denial of others' humanity. This is often achieved by comparisons to vermin, animals or property or the suggestion that targets are subhuman. Dehumanisation justifies the mistreatment of dehumanised groups.
 - **Takfir:** Excommunication of an individual or a group; the act of declaring them as disbelievers/nonbelievers.
 - **Nasarni:** An Arabic term historically meaning "Christian" or "follower of Jesus of Nazareth"; in modern contexts it can carry sensitive or negative connotations.
 - **Rafidi/ Rawafed (plural):** Meaning one/those who reject. it is a derogatory term used by some Sunnis to refer to Shia Muslims.
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Methodology

To obtain an accurate representation of online discussions related to religion and sectarianism in Jordan, ISD analysts first identified the dominant themes and narratives shaping religious discourse. A targeted set of religion and sect-related keywords was developed, refined and tested primarily on X and YouTube to detect content containing derogatory, exclusionary or discriminatory language. The team then used Brandwatch queries incorporating a wide range of hateful expressions—including slurs, derogatory labels and exclusionary terminology—to systematically capture relevant content.

Data collection from X was filtered by geolocation to ensure only content produced within Jordan was included. Throughout this process, ISD's established definitional frameworks guided keyword selection and categorization to maintain analytical consistency and accuracy.

To further enhance the precision of the dataset, analysts conducted manual searches and iterative keyword refinements within Brandwatch prior to finalising the collection. The resulting dataset covers a one-year period, spanning September 2024 to September 2025. During this time, ISD collected a total of 3,430 posts/comments referencing sectarian hate speech, all of which were subjected to manual filtering in accordance with ISD's classification framework distinguishing edge cases from hate speech (see glossary).

Additionally, analysts conducted limited data collection on YouTube. ISD's research approach attempts to be holistic by including multiple platforms. Research on YouTube was based on monitoring public posts, channels and comment sections, documenting religious and sectarian narratives while ensuring compliance with ISD's ethical guidelines. This process enabled a qualitative exploration of pages and discussions to identify patterns of derogatory, discriminatory and exclusionary discourse related to religion across public groups and influencer accounts. However, as YouTube does not support the geolocation of comments, there was an inherent challenge to whether all content originated from Jordan. Analysts observed many comments using distinct dialectal variations, indicating participation from users across different Middle Eastern and North African countries.

Introduction

Across the Middle East and North Africa, sectarianism often emerges at the intersection of politics, conflict and social identity, rather than only being a matter of religious belief. Regional crises—like the war in Syria, the tensions between Israel and Iran, and the influence of transnational movements—have shaped how [sectarian identity](#) is expressed and understood, influencing perceptions of power, loyalty and security. These narratives can spread rapidly through social media and other online platforms, affecting [public opinion](#) far beyond areas directly involved in conflict. During periods of [political instability](#), economic pressure or social uncertainty, sectarian language tends to resonate more strongly; it can reinforce fears, highlight social divisions, and influence how communities interpret events and one another. [Sectarian discourse](#) in the region often reflects regional dynamics rather than the demographics of local populations.

Jordan, for instance, is seen as a country where religious diversity is managed through constitutional guarantees, and a consistent public narrative of coexistence. Islam is the state religion, the population is predominantly Sunni and [freedom](#) of worship is formally protected, contributing to an image of stability in a region shaped by sectarian conflict. However this religious or sectarian tensions remain, appearing in indirect and uneven ways, influenced less by demographic realities and more by regional developments and questions of identity. Over time, religious differences have become a lens through which concerns about loyalty and social change are expressed, particularly as regional crises have increased.

Within this context, expressions of religious and sectarian intolerance in Jordan have targeted a range of communities. [Anti-Shia rhetoric](#) has circulated despite the small size of Shia communities in Jordan, drawing heavily on regional narratives linked to Iraq, Syria and Iran rather than local dynamics. Other groups—including Druze, Bahais, Sufis, Christians and even different Muslim traditions—have also been subjected to [exclusionary discourse](#), especially in online spaces, where people are less restrained in how they speak and regional narratives are quickly picked up and repeated.

The existing research has primarily focused on Salafi currents and their [attitudes](#) toward other sects, but this emphasis captures only part of a broader picture. Online spaces have become meeting points for [regional crises](#) and local anxieties, where religious and sectarian language is often used to draw lines, deepen divisions and shape how events are discussed.

ISD's analysis has shown that increases in online religious and sectarian hostility were closely linked to moments of heightened political instability and regional conflict, rather than occurring evenly over time. Periods marked by major regional developments—such as military escalations between Israel and Iran in September 2024 and June 2025, the violence in the southern Syrian city of [Suweyda](#) in July 2025, or highly polarising political events like the Israeli airstrike that killed Hassan Nasrallah in September 2024—were consistently accompanied by an increase in hostile and exclusionary language targeting religious and sectarian communities. In these moments, online discussions shifted from general political comments to identity-based framing, with religion and sectarian affiliations used to incite violence and othering.

Religious and sectarian hate speech on X and YouTube

Over the one-year period between September 2024 and September 2025, ISD collected a total of 3,430 comments and posts referencing sectarian hate speech in Jordan from X, identified using a predefined list of religious, sectarian and hate-related keywords.

All posts and comments were subjected to manual filtering in accordance with ISD's classification framework distinguishing edge cases from hate speech (see glossary). 18 percent of this manually reviewed subset were categorised as edge cases while 8 percent were identified as containing hate speech and 74 percent did not meet the threshold for either category.

35.8 percent of posts contained the word Shia, 27.6 percent mentioned Islam/ Muslims, 20.3 percent Sunni, 6.6 percent Druze, 3.9 percent, 5.8 percent Christians, and 4 percent Alawis, Bahais, and Sufis (minorities). It is important to note that some the of collected posts/ comments mentioned more than one sect or religion.

Sectarian hate speech

Sunnis

ISD's research team collected 697 posts/comments containing the term Sunni. Of these, only 4 percent were edge cases while another 4 percent met the criteria for hate speech (Figure 2).

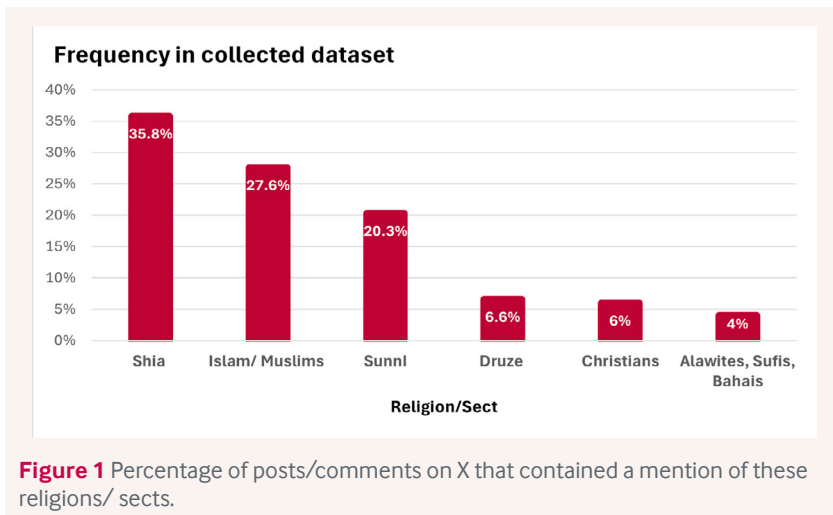


Figure 1 Percentage of posts/comments on X that contained a mention of these religions/ sects.

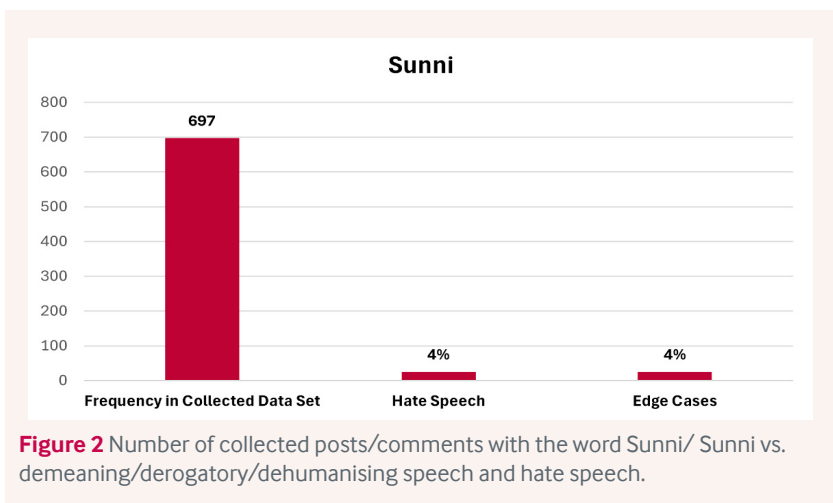


Figure 2 Number of collected posts/comments with the word Sunni/ Sunni vs. demeaning/derogatory/dehumanising speech and hate speech.

We found minimal hate speech against Sunnis on X (around 4 percent of the collected data). Where it existed, such content often contained accusations of terrorism or extremist behaviour, claiming that “most terrorists are Sunnis” (Figure 3). Such posts/comments are based on stereotypes that the majority of recognised [terrorist groups across the Muslim world are primarily Sunni](#). Research by [Fondation pour l'innovation politique \(FONDAPOL\) in 2019](#), indicates that a majority (55.4 percent) of all Islamist terrorist attacks between 1979–2019 were carried out by Sunni groups.

Our analysis from the data collected on X shows that sectarian hate speech in Jordan is primarily characterised by theological denunciation and delegitimization of other religions or sects. Posts/comments made it seem that they were clearly written by the Sunni majority—as indicated in the post/comment by the user—sometimes labelled other sects and minority groups as kuffar (كفار) and mushrikeen (مشركين) which translate respectively to “disbelievers” and “polytheists”. These keywords and their variations were mentioned 510 and 92 times respectively in the collected data (Figure 4).



Figure 3 Platform X. Translation: “to the last person, every Sunni is a dog!!! So don't pity them, these terrorists”.

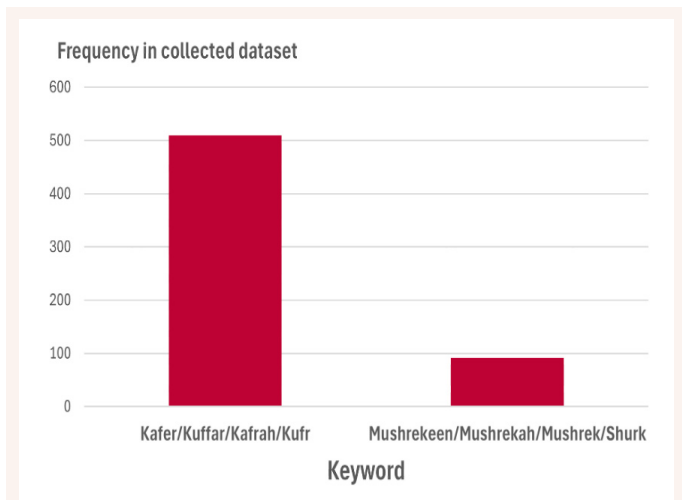


Figure 4 Frequency of kafer/ kuffar vs. mushrek/mushrikeen in the collected dataset.



Figure 5 Platform X. Translation: “Man, talk about cowardice, obsequiousness, weakness, and shame while you are Shia. Man, you are a dog for Iran; you wipe their feet, and their bu**s. Jordan's king is a throne in your throat, you sons of who***”



Figure 6 Platform X. Translation: “He who curses or insults the Sahaba [companions of the Prophet] – Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman, Mu'awiya – and our collective mother, Aisha, and her honour, are not our brothers (ikhwan). They are enemies of Islam and of Muslims. The sect that harbours the greatest hatred toward Muslims are the Shia – may God curse them”.



Figure 7 Platform X. Translation: “Because we anger them, in short... We did not allow Iran and their scu*** Shia into our country, and hopefully they will never be allowed in, inshallah [God willing]. I have never seen a Shia here in my life. We are a united people and do not tolerate any dishonour toward the Sahaba [companions of the Prophet]. May God curse the Shia kuffar (disbelievers) and those who follow them.”

Many collected posts/comments included statements from Sunnis that suggest they perceive themselves as victims of foreign political agendas. This implication was particularly notable in relation to Syria, reflecting the country's continued political instability and a belief that "the slaughter of Sunnis often falls on deaf ears". The posts/comments also asserted that the international community became outraged only in response to the deaths of minority groups, particularly the Druze following the **recent violence** in Suweyda in July 2025, where intense sectarian violence broke out between **Druze militias and Bedouin tribal fighters** following the kidnapping of a Druze merchant.



Figure 8 Platform X. Translation: "my sh*t in your beard. Damn you and damn all the rejectionists [rafida, referring to Shias] majus. You slaughter a million Sunni people, you dogs, you sons of who***".

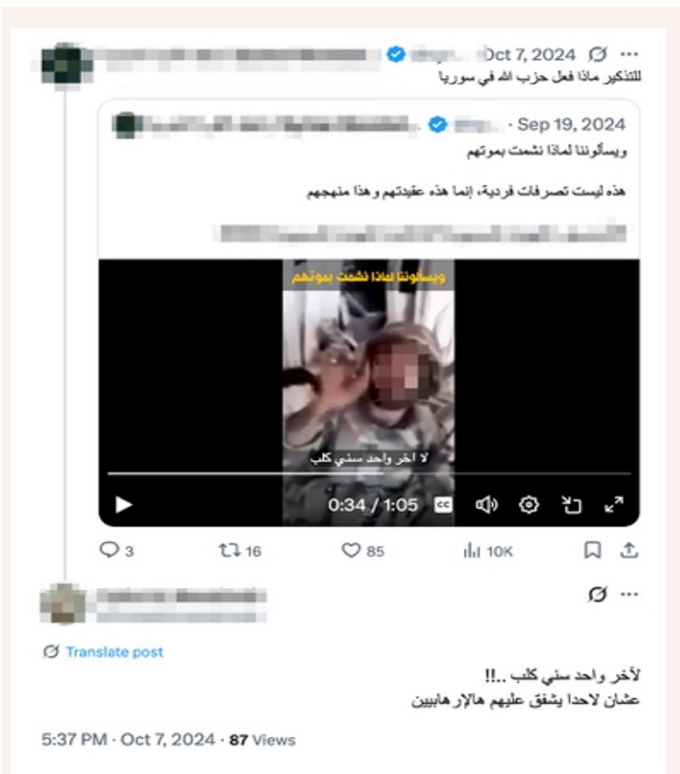


Figure 9 Platform X. Post: "They ask us why we gloat in their death. These are not individualistic acts; this is their Aqidah [doctrine] and method." Comment: "The last Sunni dog [the video states the troops killed every last Sunni]. Don't feel sorry for them, they're terrorists".

Shia

ISD's research team identified a total of 1,227 posts/comments (35.7 percent of the total collected) containing the term Shia (شيعة) and its Arabic variations (شيعي، شيعية). Of the 1,227 posts/comments, 34 percent employed demeaning, dehumanising or overtly insulting language, frequently including derogatory terms such as dog (كلب), pig (خنزير), impure (نجس) and filthy (قذر). Another 12 percent of the dataset included content that was explicitly hate speech, particularly language that is threatening or inciting violence.

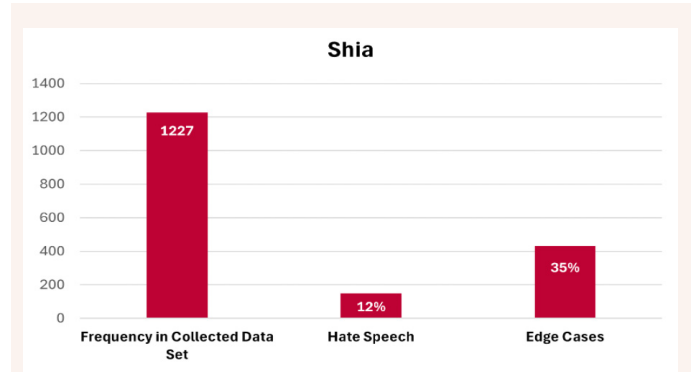


Figure 10 Total number of collected posts/comments with the word Shia/s demeaning, derogatory and dehumanising speech vs. those that cross the threshold into hate speech.

Portions of the hateful content also contained explicit threats and incitements to violence, employing keywords such as kill, slaughter, burn and extermination.



Figure 11 Platform X. Post: "We kill any Sunni terrorist here in Iraq with a shoe. You remain donkeys [idiots]". Comment: "In Jordan, we kill any Shia pig through execution and throw his body to the dogs. No 'magus' Shia dog is allowed into Jordan".



Figure 12 Platform X. Translation: "Honestly, we are thrilled for the extermination of every impure Shia or Alawi".



Figure 13 Platform X. Translation: "You are dirty and impure. A Shia and majus have never and will never be Muslims. Burn them and their supporters".

Posts/comments frequently expressed overt hostility toward the very existence of Shia Muslims, often referencing what users described as the sect's "unrighteous" or "illegitimate" origins in the early Islamic dispute over the Prophet Muhammad's succession. This framing situates Shia Islam as a historical deviation from perceived orthodoxy, reinforcing sectarian narratives that question its authenticity and religious legitimacy.



Figure 14 Platform X. You are Persian kuffar [disbelievers] sons of who***... the Sunni are the sons of Abu Bakr, Omar, Ali, Hussien, Mu'awia and the respectable Sahaba [companions of the prophet] ... You, the Shias are the filthiest creatures in history.



Figure 15 Platform X. "The truth is as clear as the sun: the Shia are kuffar [disbelievers], apostates and deserters of Islam. They call upon Al-Zahra' and Al-Husayn – how can anyone still believe that they care about Al-Aqsa and other sacred holy sites".

Collected data from both X and YouTube contained numerous examples of content that cursed, condemned and denounced Shia Muslims and other minority groups, commonly labelling them as disbelievers (kuffar) or polytheists (mushrikeen). Such terminology carries significant theological weight within Islamic discourse: both terms are traditionally associated with those who reject or distort the core tenets of faith. By applying these labels, users symbolically expelled Shia Muslims from the boundaries of Islam, framing them as ideological and spiritual outsiders.

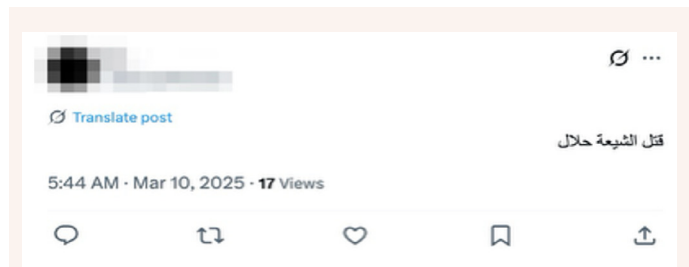


Figure 16 Platform X. "Killing Shia is halal".



Figure 17 Platform: X. Post: "They killed him and his grandson with no fault of their own". Comment: "Because he is Shia kafir. Every Shia person should be slaughtered".

This rhetorical dehumanisation frequently escalated into explicit calls for violence. Some comments claim that “their blood is halal”, a phrase that implies divine sanction for killing or harming Shia groups, as well as explicit statement that “Shia Muslims should be killed”. Such language legitimises sectarian aggression and reflects the normalisation of hate speech, blurring the line between theological condemnation and incitement to physical violence.

Keywords that were frequently used in relation to Shia include majus/magus or **Zoroastrians** (مجوس). The term is often misused to depict Shia as ‘sun worshippers’ or followers of a pre-Islamic Persian faith, implying that their beliefs deviate from “true” Islam. Another recurring label is zindiq or heretic (زنديق), historically associated with individuals accused of hypocrisy, apostasy or the concealment of disbelief. Such terminology serves to further delegitimise Shia identity by associating it with religious impurity, moral corruption and betrayal of Islamic orthodoxy. The repeated use of these pejorative descriptors underscores an effort to frame Shia Muslims as outsiders to the faith, justifying discrimination or hostility toward them in online discourse.



Figure 18 Platform: YouTube. “Houthis are Shia disbelieving polytheist dogs. It’s our duty to slaughter them”.

The analysed data highlights several examples where hate speech towards Shia Muslims overlaps with hate targeting other minorities, particularly Druze and Alawis. In some cases, posts/comments discouraged dealing with or sympathising with these minorities because they are “non-Sunnis” and are hence ideologically excluded from Islam.

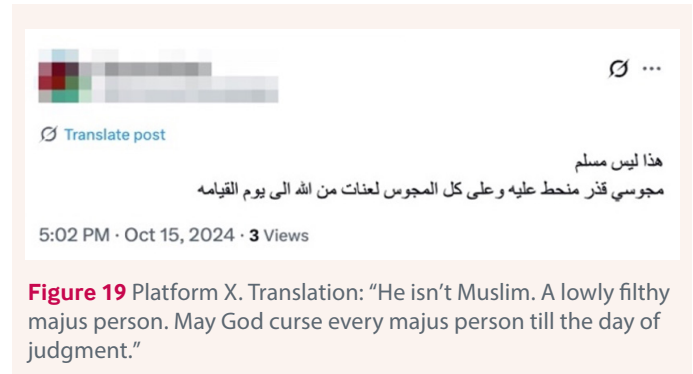


Figure 19 Platform X. Translation: “He isn’t Muslim. A lowly filthy majus person. May God curse every majus person till the day of judgment.”



Figure 20 Platform X. Translation: “The Shias from Persia and Iraq deceived our master Ali and our master Hussein while pledging allegiance to them, then betrayed them, deceived them, and abandoned them. May God’s curse be upon the Shias and the Persians and the Majus, the people of discord and hypocrisy. May God place you in the lowest level of Hell. You introduced polytheism into Islam. The family of the Prophet is innocent of your doings and curse you until the Day of Judgment”.



Figure 21 Platform X. Comment: “Do not make the mistake of sympathising with any Shia or Alawis. It’ll be good if you can be strong and perform a small Holocaust for them”.

Alawis

Alawis are generally considered a heterodox branch of Shia Islam and were included in this research due to their presence in the dataset. Although Alawis are not among the officially recognized religious groups in Jordan, they are incorporated into the analysis because they fall within the broader Shi'a classification. Their relative visibility in the data, compared to other Shi'a sects, is largely attributable to the religious affiliation of the former Syrian regime.

The collected dataset found 106 posts/comments referencing Alawis (3 percent of the total dataset collected), 1.9 percent of which contained hate speech that called for their "extermination". The group also faced othering, demeaning and insulting language (Figure 23) in the form of takfir; they were often labelled kuffar, mushrikeen, or zanadiq (plural or zindiq). These edge cases represented 3.7 percent of the total posts/comments mentioning Alawis.

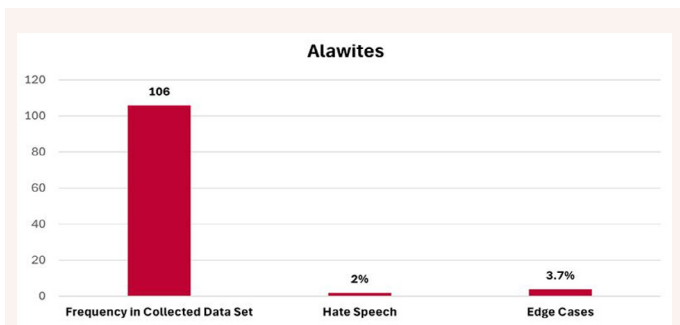


Figure 22 Frequency of hate speech posts/comments towards Alawis.



Figure 23 Platform X. Translation: "Eliminate them with dignity, and don't leave any kuffar [disbelievers] Druze or Alawis living."



Figure 24 Platform X. Post: "Oh yes, truly Muslims! (sarcastic), Alawis are some of wh**, all of them without any exceptions. Alright guys, full extermination".

Druze

The Druze community in Jordan is small, with estimates ranging between 15,000 and 20,000 individuals. Their historical roots trace back to the Ismaili branch of Shi'a Islam, though over centuries the Druze faith developed distinct principles.

Officially, the Jordanian government records Druze citizens as Muslims on national identity documents. They are allowed to practice their religion and maintain social halls. However, their religious sites are not always formally recognised as places of worship.

ISD's research team identified a total of 226 posts/comments containing references to the Druze community and variations of the term. Among these, 26 percent exhibited derogatory, demeaning or dehumanising language, while 20 percent instances passed the threshold for hate speech.

In our analysis, seven percent of posts/comments claimed Druze are not only non-Muslims but also kuffar and mushrikeen. As with Shia, researchers found cases where those terms were followed with threats and calls for violence, claiming that Druze “blood is halal” and they should be “slaughtered”.

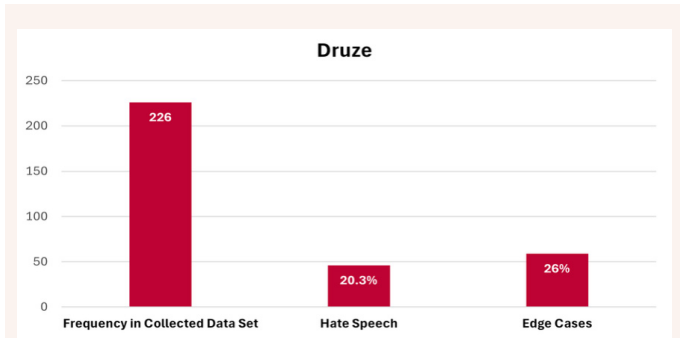


Figure 25 The number of times Druze/ Druzi were mentioned in the collected dataset, along with the number of derogatory, demeaning and dehumanising posts/comments, as well as the amount of hate speech collected.

Users have drawn associations between Jews and the Shia and Druze communities, framing them as a common adversary to Sunnis.

This dynamic is partly attributable to the close relationship between the Druze community and Israel, wherein the Israeli government has **provided assistance** and support to Druze populations in both the occupied Palestinian territories and Syria on multiple occasions. The events in Suweyda in July 2025 resulted from the outbreak of sectarian violence between Druze militias and Bedouin tribal fighters. ISD found that hate speech targeting the **Druze** population notably intensified during and after the Suweyda attacks. Violence tends to exacerbate existing sectarian narratives and fears that exist between the Druze communities and other sects. The Suweyda attacks made online audiences more reactive and more likely to engage in hate speech.



Figure 26 Platform X. Post: “The Druze sect| the traitor agent Hikmat Al-Hijri. We ask that the roads between Jordan and the Kurdish brothers be open. We ask King Abdullah the second of Jordan to open the boarders between Suweyda and Jordan for humanitarian purposes in these difficult times.”. Comment: “Any boarder path between Suweyda and Jordan should be met with fire power and bullets. Any Durzi traitor from Suweyda should meet fire”.

In addition to the dehumanising and derogatory language used towards the Druze communities—including describing them as dogs, pigs, impure, and filthy—hateful posts/comments also employed ‘othering’ rhetoric such as “they are not Muslims”, “dogs of Zionists”, “traitors”, “with no honour”, “may God curse them”.



Figure 27 Platform X. “May the Druze by cursed. You dogs, you are shoes, you were pigs during Al-Assad’s reign. Al Share’ honoured you. I swear to God slaughtering you is halal.

In our analysis, seven percent of posts/comments claimed Druze are not only non-Muslims but also kuffar and mushrikeen. As with Shia, researchers found cases where those terms were followed with threats and calls for violence, claiming that Druze “blood is halal” and they should be “slaughtered”.



Figure 28 Platform X. Translation: “You are a Druze from the gang of Al-Hijri, an Israeli agent -God curse you, your father, your grandfather, and every Druze who took part in the killing of our Bedouin people. You are all, traitors, agents, vile, treacherous, dishonourable cowards- you killed children and women unjustly. I swear to God if our leader opened the borders, we’d come from Jordan and rip you to pieces and make you an example for the whole world to see, you pigs.”

Christianity

A total of 200 social media posts/comments were identified containing the term “Christ” (مسيح) as well as its Arabic variations (مسيحية, مسيحي, مسيحين), as well as Nasrani/s (نصراني and نصاري) which all refer to Christian/s but are often used in a negative or archaic tone. Nasrani meaning people of Nazareth and followers of “Jesus”, was also the Qur’anic term used for Christians. In contemporary speech, the words نصاري, نصراني became associated with notions of “otherness”, a derogatory or dismissive name to refer to **Christians**—particularly in sectarian discourse and extremist rhetoric online and offline.

The terms “Crusader/s” (صليبيين and صليبي) are also highly charged, politicized and historically loaded terms. In contemporary Middle Eastern **usage**, both terms carry strong hostile, militaristic and sectarian connotations due to their reference to the European Christian military campaigns against Muslim territories in the past.

Of the total posts/comments collected with the various terms of Christian/s and crusader/s, 12 percent contained hate speech, and 8 percent were classified as edge cases because they contain derogatory and insulting terms (Figure 29). Notably, this case is the only instance in this research effort where hate speech exceeded the number of edge cases.

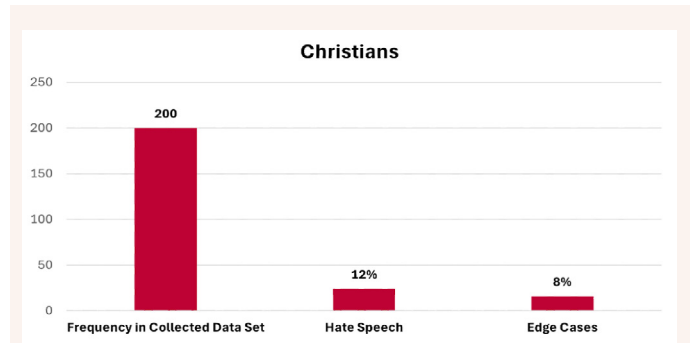


Figure 29 Platform X. The use of eight keywords that mean Christians/crusaders and the frequency of their use in the collected dataset.

Figure 30 below shows the amount of hate speech associated with the aforementioned terms.

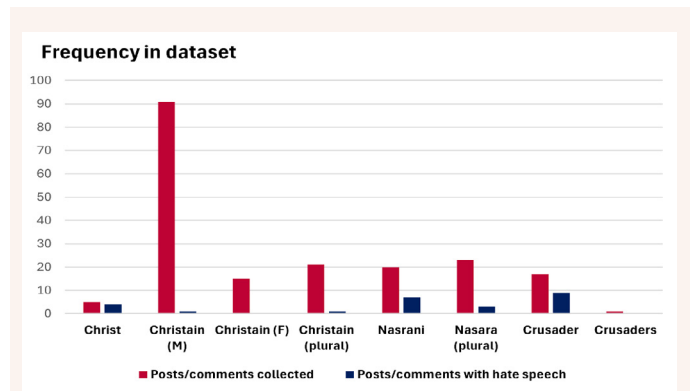


Figure 30 Frequency of each Christian keyword as mentioned in the dataset, and the amount of hate speech collected.

Although the term Christian (مسيحي) was used 91 times through the collected comments/posts, no examples of hate speech were located. By contrast, a higher amount of hate speech was linked to the use of the words Christian Nasrani (seven of 20 posts/comments and crusader (nine of 17 posts/comment. Most of this content involved expressions of takfir and theological debates concerning the permissibility of offering prayers for mercy or peace upon the death of Christians within Islamic doctrine (Figure 30).



Figure 31 Platform X. Post: “The sincere condolences to the fans of this man, Frank Caprio. I mourn his loss. I ask God to grant his family patience and solace”. Comment: “Shut your mangy mouth if you are a Muslim. He is kafir, and no mercy is allowed for him, he’s going to hell. If only Muslims think with the heads God gave you. He does not believe in Allah, how do you want God to grant him mercy”.

A particularly illustrative example of the religious and social debates that surface in Jordan following the death of prominent non-Muslim figures is the case of Shireen Abu Akleh. Abu Akleh, a Palestinian-American Christian journalist renowned for her extensive reporting with Al-Jazeera, was **killed 11 May 2022**, while covering an Israeli military raid in the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. Multiple independent **investigations** later concluded that the fatal shot was likely fired by an Israeli soldier.

Abu Akleh’s death generated widespread international condemnation and social media discussions (particularly on X) among Jordanians and others in the region. The central point of contention revolved around whether it was religiously permissible to invoke mercy or prayers for her soul given her Christian faith, despite her reputation for integrity, courage and her death while reporting

under occupation. These debates underscore broader tensions in Jordanian online discourse, where expressions of solidarity can intersect with sectarian boundaries and theological interpretations of compassion and belonging.



Figure 32 Platform X. Translation: “Shireen_Abu_Akleh is Kafreh (non-believer), she belongs in hell. This is an undebatable fact”.



Figure 33 Platform X. Translation: “You’re an idiot, or you do not know how to express yourself. Anyway, marriage of kuffar, especially Jews and Christians....? Shireen Abu Akleh is a Christian kafreh [non-believer]. Generality and specificity are known through [Islamic] texts. I don’t understand what you are objecting to, or perhaps it’s you who doesn’t understand it”.

In the post/comment below, a user wonders why Jordanians have double standards given that the public may invoke mercy or prayers for Abu Akleh, but not other prominent non-Sunni figures. Based on ISD's internal framing of edge cases, determining that a group does not deserve peace upon death based on their sect or religious background is demeaning or insulting.



Figure 34 Platform X. Translation: Post: "When Shireen Abu Akleh was killed, everyone wished her mercy because of the enemy who killed her, even though she wasn't Muslim. How things have changed now". Comment 1: "[Name], are you serious... Shireen and her religion didn't kill Muslims. She didn't commit the crimes that Hasan [the prophet's grandson], the Shia, did against Sunni Muslims". Comment 2: "I don't mean killing; I mean she is Christian, and he is Shia, but everyone wished her mercy".

ISD found similar rhetoric regarding takfiring Christians (declaring them as nonbelievers) as a normal and logical conclusion. Demeaning and dehumanising post/comments were also identified: they often called Christians "filthy", "animals" or "pigs", particularly because they are the only Abrahamic religion that permits the consumption of pork (Figure 35 and 36).

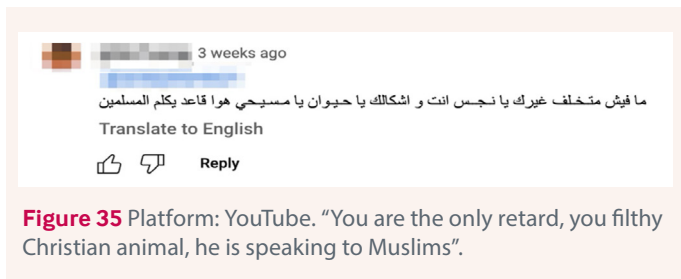


Figure 35 Platform: YouTube. "You are the only retard, you filthy Christian animal, he is speaking to Muslims".

It is interesting to note that in many cases, posts/comments use the term Nasrani (نصراني) as an insult alongside Israeli and Zionist (صهيوني or إسرائيلي), and sometimes Jewish (يهودي). In such cases, Nasrani is used in an exclusionary, derogatory and offensive manner. Analysis of these posts/comments also shows that users who attach these terms together do not necessarily differentiate between Christianity and Judaism, or do not understand the use of نصراني and نصارى (Christian vs Christians).

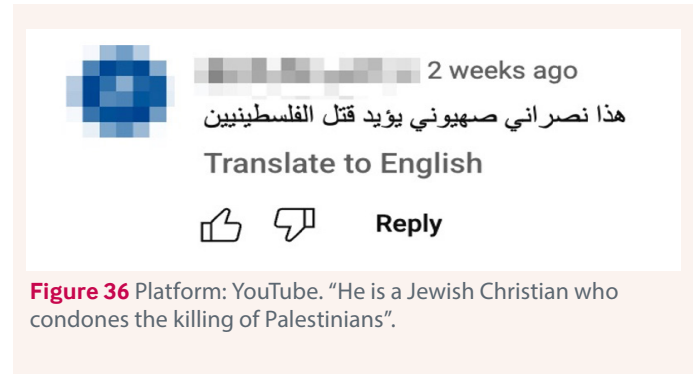


Figure 36 Platform: YouTube. "He is a Jewish Christian who condones the killing of Palestinians".

Bahais and Sufis

As with other religions and sects, Bahais and Sufis faced dehumanising, demeaning and insulting language; they are also labelled as kuffar or mushrikeen.

In the case of the Bahai community, the data revealed only eight mentions, of which only 13 percent were considered hateful. Surprisingly, around 50 percent were edge cases, which contained derogatory and demeaning language (Figure 37).

Users referred to [Abbas Effendi](#), the eldest son of Bahauallah (founder of the Bahai Faith). Posts/comments included hate speech describing Abbas with demeaning and dehumanising epithets such as "pig" and "dog".

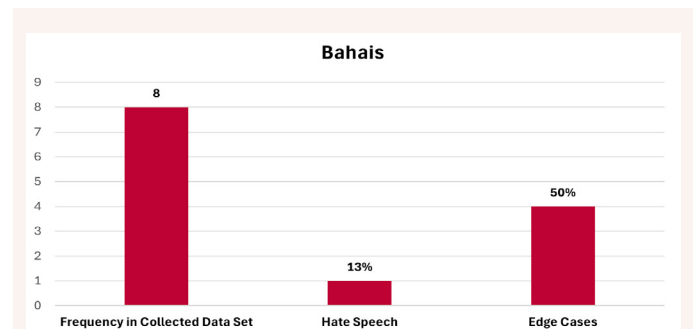


Figure 37 Frequency of hate speech posts/comments towards Bahais.

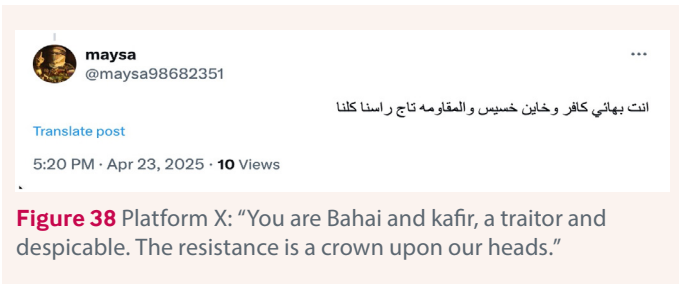


Figure 38 Platform X: "You are Bahai and kafir, a traitor and despicable. The resistance is a crown upon our heads."

Similarly, Sufis were scarcely mentioned, appearing in only 21 posts/comments, 10 percent of which contained hate speech, while 33.3 percent were demeaning and included insults directed at the Sufi community (Figure 39). As with other groups, Sufis were referred to as kuffar, mushrikeen, and zanadiq (Figure 40). In certain instances, users went as far as to state, "may God curse them."

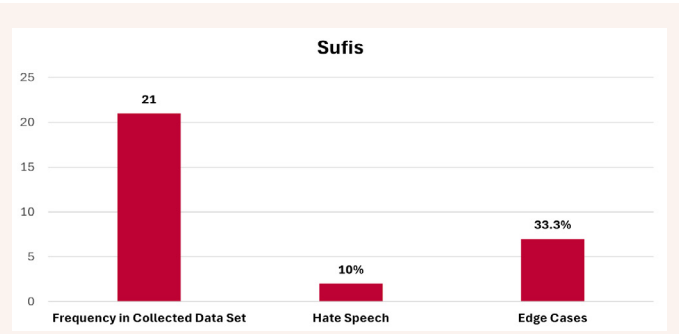


Figure 39 Frequency of hate speech posts/comments towards Sufis.

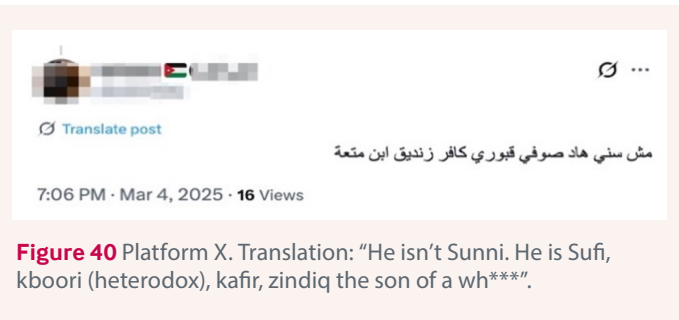


Figure 40 Platform X. Translation: "He isn't Sunni. He is Sufi, kboori (heterodox), kafir, zindiq the son of a wh***".

Conclusion and Recommendations

Overall, Jordan continues to be perceived as a cohesive society characterized by religious coexistence. However, the analysis indicates that a subset of social media users utilizes digital platforms to express extremist views towards certain sects and religious communities, often employing exclusionary, derogatory and dehumanizing language. This rhetoric predominantly targets groups historically associated with tensions or political controversies involving Sunni Muslims in the region, particularly Shia communities (including Alawis) and Druze populations. In these exchanges, religious labels such as kuffar and mushriken are deployed to challenge legitimacy and belonging, turning faith into a tool for exclusion rather than coexistence. Similar patterns are observed in content targeting Bahais and Sufi groups, who are widely regarded by Muslims across sects as existing outside accepted religious boundaries.

While the volume of hate speech remains relatively limited, its presence in everyday online conversations matters. On social media platforms emotionally charged and provocative content spreads more easily, which contributes to its normalisation or mainstreaming. Addressing these dynamics therefore requires sustained attention to how online spaces shape public attitudes, as well as proactive efforts to reinforce inclusive narratives and protect social cohesion in Jordan's digital sphere.

Recommendations for Digital Platforms

- **Policy implementation and enforcement:** Platforms should consistently enforce policies and proactively use keywords to detect and moderate hateful hashtags, slogans and slurs. Hateful terminology—including references to “extermination” and “slaughter”—should be subject to stricter detection, flagging and filtering mechanisms. Enforcement must cover both user-reported content and proactive moderation measures.
- **Language and dialect and contextual expertise:** Enhance automated moderation tools to more effectively recognize Jordanian and other regional Arabic dialects, where expressions of religious bias are often embedded in localized linguistic forms. This should be complemented by increased human moderation capacity, including Arabic-speaking reviewers with familiarity in national, local and sectarian contexts, to ensure accurate interpretation

of culturally specific references, coded language and implicit bias that automated systems may overlook.

- **Transparency and accountability:** Platforms, X in particular, should publish updated detailed annual transparency reports on content moderation practices, broken down by language and more specifically, the Jordanian dialect. This step is necessary to allow external scrutiny of the scale and scope of exclusionary content in Arabic.

Recommendations for the Jordanian Government and Civil Society

- **Promote interfaith dialogue:** Support initiatives that highlight Jordan's history of religious coexistence and shared heritage—particularly towards the Christian faith—both in education and public communication.
- **Encourage digital citizenship:** Integrate media and digital literacy programs into school curricula to help young people recognise online religious hate speech, particularly how that may appear in Jordanian slang—including coded terms and euphemisms, such as “chest slappers” (اللطامين). This can include educating students on:
 - Language to that is used to discriminate against or insult certain groups,
 - The difference between expressing opinions and hate speech,
 - Social, legal and ethical consequences of online discrimination.
- **Engage with tech platforms:** Establish a national coordination channel with X (along other major platforms) to ensure locally informed moderation policies that reflect Jordan's social context.
- **Monitor and document:** Strengthen existing efforts at the Electronic Crimes Unit to enhance public engagement by equipping individuals with the tools and mechanisms needed to detect and report online hate speech, thus providing reliable data and analysis to inform national dialogue.
- **Promote inclusive narratives:** Develop public awareness campaigns and digital media content that highlights positive examples of coexistence and mutual respect across Islam and Christianity. This content can include showcasing historical moments of interfaith solidarity, as well as profiles of local leaders and youth who advocate for tolerance and amplifying community-based initiatives that strengthen social cohesion.

- **Build community resilience:** Develop training and support networks for individuals and groups targeted by hate speech, focusing on psychosocial well-being and online safety.
- **Promote partnerships:** Encourage collaboration between religious institutions, youth organisations and media outlets to counter misinformation and reduce polarisation.

Implemented by



