



# Umati: Monitoring Online Dangerous Speech

October 2012 - January 2013





## Introduction

Hate speech has garnered growing interest in Kenya since the 2007/8 Post Election Violence, in which it seems to have played a role, and because it has been rising again in certain contexts - online for example - in the period leading to our next presidential elections in just over two weeks. In response to this, Umati has conducted a unique, first-ever project to 1) monitor the Kenyan online space for hate speech; 2) analyze the speech for how likely it is to stir violence; 3) find and use non-government ways of countering it.

Under Article 13 of the National Cohesion and Integration Act of 2008, a person who uses speech (including words, programs, images or plays) that is "threatening, abusive or insulting or involves the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour commits an offence if such person intends thereby to stir up ethnic hatred, or having regard to all the circumstances, ethnic hatred is likely to be stirred up." Notably, the Act mentions ethnic hatred only - not hatred based on religion, gender, nationality, sexual preference, or any other group category.

Other Kenyan laws also touch on hate speech, in diverse ways. The 2010 Constitution notes that freedom of expression does not extend to hate speech - but does not define that term. Kenya's Code of Conduct for political parties (attached to the Political Parties Act) forbids parties to "advocate hatred that constitutes ethnic incitement, vilification of others or incitement to cause harm."

The law is still imprecise, in other words, and there has been an escalating demand from peacebuilding organisations, politicians, government officials and the general public for more detail on how to define, identify, mitigate, report and deal with hate speech.

This need motivated the Umati project to facilitate easier identification of hate speech, especially the type of hate speech that has a potential to trigger violence so that the violence can be avoided or diminished. The type of hate speech that has the capacity to

Dangerous speech does not by itself cause violence, but instead has the capacity to promote or inflame violence - even when people are heavily influenced by speech, they are able to resist its power, and are legally and morally responsible if they commit violence.

1. National Cohesion and Integration Act, 2008, Art. 13. <http://www.cohesion.or.ke/images/downloads/national%20cohesion%20and%20integration%20act%202008.pdf>



Professor Susan Benesch of American University (Washington, DC, USA), an authority on hate speech as a precursor to violence in many countries, defines dangerous speech as speech that has a reasonable possibility of helping to catalyze violence.

She has developed a five-point analytical tool for gauging when violence is likely to be stirred up, to borrow language from the National Cohesion and Integration Act, or as Prof. Benesch puts it, for estimating the dangerousness of a particular speech act in the context in which it was made or disseminated (The impact of speech always depends on the context.) These are factors identified by Professor Benesch that make speech more or less powerful:

- **the speaker and his or her influence over an audience (a political, cultural, or religious leader? Someone with a large following of another kind?)**
- **the audience and its reasons for taking inflammatory speech seriously (already fearful? receiving information mainly from one source?);**
- **the content in the speech that may be taken as inflammatory (serious offense against what is sacrosanct to another community? Referring to humans as pests or vermin?)**

- **the social and historical context of the speech (previous clashes between two groups? Competition over land or other resources? hardship?);**
- **the means of spreading the speech, including the language in which it is expressed (mother tongue?) and medium (a radio station, TV network, or blog that, itself, has influence?).**

Note that this list does not include the intent of the speaker. Intent must always be considered when defining a crime or building a case for prosecution, but that is not our purpose. Umati aims above all to prevent violence, and we are also strongly dedicated to freedom of speech. Therefore we seek to prevent dangerous speech and violence by mobilizing civil society, not government regulation or prosecution.

The Umati project seeks to identify and understand the use of dangerous speech in the Kenyan online space, in order to find and use non-government ways to reduce its effects of violence on the ground. To this end, we have created NipeUkweli - an outreach effort to debunk inciteful myths and reduce the possible effects of dangerous speech.



## Goals of Umati

Following the need to define, identify and deal with dangerous speech, the goals of the Umati project are:

1. To correctly define the type of speech that is harmful to the Kenyan society and thus enable all citizens to know the limits and freedoms of their speech. Moreover, it is important to identify dangerous speech early in order to prevent the violence it has the potential to catalyse.
2. To forward calls for help to Uchaguzi ([www.uchaguzi.co.ke](http://www.uchaguzi.co.ke)), a technology-based system that enables citizens to report and keep an eye on election-related events on the ground.
3. To define a process for online hate speech tracking that can be replicated elsewhere.
4. To further civic education on dangerous speech so that Kenyans are more responsible in their communication and interactions with people from differing backgrounds.

It is not the goal of Umati to define the law, or to find and prosecute the perpetrators of dangerous speech. Umati is a civil society project, not a legal or policing body.

### Why Online?

While most projects related to hate speech have been looking at mainstream media, we are aware of the influence—positive and negative—that New Media such as the blogosphere and online forums had during the 2007 Post Election Violence in Kenya. Therefore, our flagship project seeks to monitor and report, for the first time, the role New Media plays on a Kenyan election.

## Monitoring Process

Beginning in September 2012 the Umati project has monitored online content and recorded incidences of hate and dangerous speech - categorising them according to dangerousness, using the five criteria noted above. We plan to continue monitoring through April 2013, with a final analysis report to be released in May 2013.

This process is being carried out by five monitors, representing the four largest ethnic groups in Kenya, with the fifth monitor focusing on Kiswahili, the national language and Sheng, which is a slang dialect mixing Kiswahili and English.

Cited incidences of hate speech are translated from vernacular to the country's official language, English. The monitors check blogs written in their vernacular language, blogs in English, Facebook pages and groups, Twitter timelines, online newspapers and video streams of the major media houses in Kenya.

As of February 2013, we added a sixth monitor from the Somali community.



## Understanding Umati's Three Hate Speech Categories

Statements that we collect for our Umati project are categorised into three categories of hate speech, depending on their likelihood to catalyse violence. The category with the highest likelihood to cause violence is extremely dangerous speech.

The three categories are:

### **1. Offensive speech**

Comments in this category are mostly intended to insult a particular group. The speaker usually has little influence over the audience, the content of the text is barely inflammatory, and it generally does not call upon the audience to commit a harmful action against the targeted group. Statements in this category have very little potential to spark violence.

To note here is that some of the statements that fall in the offensive speech category may be very strong and ugly insults, or negative stereotypes that may encourage the audience to hate the target group.

Hence, if these statements are repeated by influential speakers, to more vulnerable crowds, they can very easily become extremely dangerous statements, which have the highest potential to ignite violence.

### **Examples:**

*"This jigger men will steal votes as the usually do, this time tuna wapeleka Hague.."*

*"Even Jesus was a Gay. it's a matter of personal choice."*

*"Tumezoea mawe, tairi, na kelele ni kawaida kwa omena stylep [tribe]"*

*"[subtribe] are useless cowards who will never develop"*

*"Kazi ya [tribe],mali haramu na ugaidi. Shidwe mademoni."*

*In an effort to avoid fuelling hateful speech, we have deliberately omitted the naming of any tribes, political parties or politicians when writing this report. For example, when we quote statements verbatim from our study, we replace the named tribes with the terms [tribe], [tribe1] etc.*



## 2. Moderately Dangerous Speech

Comments in this category are moderately inflammatory and are usually made by speakers with little to moderate influence over their audience. The content of the statements have a mixed effect on the audience; they can be very inflammatory to some, and barely inflammatory to others. Though some can be viewed as very inflammatory, they are grouped in this category because we consider the moderate influence the speaker has over the audience, which is a factor of the little to moderate response the statement received from the audience.

### Examples:

*"sorry 2 say so [religion] r not peaceful peoples. thy r creatures that should not live near or together with human. look at Asia continent Africa, europ everywhere in world they are trouble makers. something mst be done with this so calld .."*

*"Never ever.If anything the [race] who live among us are Worms in our stomachs, Jiggers in our toes and we should not reward them for promoting theft of public resources in the name of fake businesses in the last 50 years"*

*"WHEN WILL SOME [tribe] STOP CHOOSING TO BE THICK. SHOW US WHY YOU WENT TO SCHOOL YOU FOOLS"*

*In an effort to avoid fuelling hateful speech, we have deliberately omitted the naming of any tribes, political parties or politicians when writing this report. For example, when we quote statements verbatim from our study, we replace the named tribes with the terms [tribe], [tribe1] etc.*



## 3. Extremely Dangerous Speech

Comments in this category are usually made by speakers with a moderate to high influence over the crowd, are extremely inflammatory and have the highest potential to promote violence.

These comments contain clear or implied calls to beat, forcefully evict or kill, which are often stated as truths or orders.

Examples follow,

i. *[tribe] na nyef nyef zao....waanze kuhama*

ii. *"Bcoz [tribe] are thieves the response of a thief is fire/....bcoz u always like to live on hard way this opinion poll=violence..... NO RAILA NO RAIS."*

iii. *Washenzi warudi makwao!!! We must meet n take this to parliament! If ur not blood raised, utahama Nchi yetu! Mafi ya kuku wasio na akili!!! Nkst!*

iv. *"I urge all my tribesmen to fight,anihilate,assasinate and execute,when the opportunity will present itself,all those who benefited in this squables. REVENGE!!REVENGE!!REVENGE!!"*

v. *"[tribe1] [tribe2] [tribe3] Tasks incase of another PEV should violence begin.*

1) *[tribe3] will 'take care' of [tribe4] in ... and other areas they border of RV province ,*

2) *[tribe2] will 'take care' of both [tribe5] and [tribe4] in Nairobi, ....together we will cleanse this country of parasites and traitors"*

From analysing our data, we find that these comments catalyze violence by:

a) exacerbating fear in the audience and in this way encouraging them to protect themselves against the targeted group (e.g. example v and vi above);

b) by calling on the audience to seek revenge on the targeted group (e.g. example iv above);

c) encouraging the audience to harm the targeted group based on often inaccurate beliefs the speaker promotes about the targeted group (example ii above).

Comments in the Extremely Dangerous Speech category have the highest potential to catalyse violence as they provide a plan of action that can be well understood and even acted upon by the intended audience (although perhaps not by all readers).

## What is Dangerous, What is Not?

### Frequently Asked Questions

Due to the recent reminder by the Government that hate speech is an offence that can result in fines and/or jail time, several citizens have become more conscious of hate speech, without fully understanding what it is. The result is that several misinformed citizens incorrectly accuse each other of committing hate speech acts or being limited in their freedom of speech.

As Umati, we have received several questions concerning hate speech, political speech, dangerous speech and the freedom of speech. This section addresses these questions and others, in order to correctly define what speech is legal, and what speech is not.

### What is the difference between hate speech and dangerous speech?

According to Professor Susan Benesch, "hate speech is a large variously defined category of speech that is usually offensive to members of groups it purports to describe, but may not increase the chances of violence being committed against them.

Dangerous speech on the other hand is communication that may help catalyze mass violence by moving an audience to condone - or even take part in - such violence.

Note that, unlike hate speech, dangerous speech focuses on the speech's effect on the audience and not the the state of mind of the speaker. The effect of speech on an audience cannot be accurately predicted of course, and usually cannot be measured even in retrospect. To identify dangerous speech, we must make a guess about the likely consequences or impact of speech."

### Does limiting dangerous speech impede one's freedom of speech?

No. Correctly defining the type of speech that is harmful to the society allows the society to express itself even more freely in the type of speech that is harmless. Due to the potential harm of dangerous speech, limiting it promotes peace in the society and encourages cohesion among various differing groups of people.

### What is the difference between political speech and dangerous speech?

Political speech and dangerous speech are not mutually exclusive categories. There can be dangerous political speech and responsible political speech. Political speech is dangerous when it calls upon the audience to harm or condone the harm of a political group/class.

### **Does Umati arrest the offenders of dangerous speech?**

No. Umati is a research project under iHub Research and Ushahidi that tracks the Kenyan online space for hate and dangerous speech.

### **What does Umati do with the hate speech statements it collects?**

Umati forwards instances of extremely dangerous speech as well as any calls for action that require intervention to Uchaguzi (uchaguzi.co.ke). Uchaguzi is a multi-stakeholder initiative coordinated through an ICT platform built by Ushahidi (ushahidi.com), which enables Kenyans to keep an eye on the vote and provides avenues through which they can report, with any technology available to them, any incidences significant to the election.

Furthermore, Umati qualitatively analyses the data it collects in order to contribute to research in the areas of machine learning, human monitoring, education on ethnic diversity, influence of religion on speech and other research areas.

## How Do You Identify Dangerous Speech?

### 1. It is targeted at a group of people and not a single person.

Dangerous speech is harmful speech that calls the audience to condone or take part in violent acts against a group of people.

From our research we have seen that dangerous speech in the Kenyan online space occurs along various lines including tribal, religious, gender, political and racial lines.

Examples from our study follow:

#### Against people of different tribal groups

*"Hawa [tribe1]\* wana shida ya ulimi .watawekwa kamba wote.keep up Dpp."*

*"..continue spreading rumours in their name u niggers dats y kila pahali nyi humangana kama mambuzi na mdomo zinanuka poo! shameless [tribe2] who got nothing except big dicks for fucking dats y mnakufa na HIV juu d only way mnajua kutafta pesa ni kuuza mwili zenu stupid!.. "*

*"Wacha wauliwe kabisa we want peace in Kenya.Yesterday on Qtv news there was a Man with a gun And he is not a Police man.Y have the gurns my [tribe3] brothers? are u not huligans? after being killed u start dragging religion into mistakes and sins u commit."*

#### Against women

*"[religion] are taught that women are worthless"*

*"Women Wakatwe clitoris mambwa hao they reek of mences"*

#### Against people of different religion

*"[Place of worship1] ziangushwe zote"*

*"wetha u lyk or nt [Place of Worship2] zitaisha day by day"*

#### Against people of different sexual orientation

*"I hate gay wil all my breath...may u b knocked by a lorry as u cross the road...'proud to b a gay my vomit"*

#### Against people of different race

*"Never ever.If anything the [race] who live among us are Worms in our stomachs ,jiggers in our toes and we should not reward them for promoting theft of public resources in the name of fake businesses in the last 50 years"*

It's important to note that an ugly or critical comment about an individual - a politician, for example - is not hate speech unless it targets that person as a member of a group.

Hate speech is directed at a group, or at a person as part of a group: a tribe, religion, etc.

During election periods, it is not uncommon for negative statements to be made against politicians and other influential personalities. This is a normal part of the political process, as long as the statements do not constitute defamation, threats, hate speech, or dangerous speech.

Examples of such comments, which are against particular politicians but **not dangerous speech**, are below:

*"7 reasons why Uhuru don't deserve Kalenjin's votes:*

*1. His family is linked to historical land injustice in Rift-valley; you all know what happened after the British settlers left, late Kenyatta relocated his tribes men to take over our ancestral land.*

*2. Kalenjins voted for him in 2002 in respect to former president Moi; after he lost to Kibaki, he became opposition leader. With his position he went silent while Kalenjins suffered hatred of Kibaki's NARC....."*

*"... Raila is so selfish that he only thinks about himself and as a politician you don't act like this aging baboon does, he always let's his opposition grow and it decreases his chances of becoming the president of this holy nation"*

*"Mudavadi is an idiot with no balls; Uhuru worked very hard to form the party and then this parasite expect a free landing?...He thought Uhuru was stupid to an extent he and Moi FAMILY wanted to take Uhuru's party..what a looser"*

*"Kenya National Congress (KNC) Presidential hopeful Peter Kenneth has urged the Kikuyu community to desist from voting Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto saying the two leaders are tribal."*

## How Do You Identify Dangerous Speech?

### 2. May contain one of the hallmarks/pillars of dangerous speech

From studying cases of violence that was exacerbated by inflammatory speech from a variety of countries and historical periods including Germany (1930s), Rwanda (1990s), Cote d'Ivoire (2002/3, 2011), Kenya (2002, 2007/8), Prof. Susan Benesch has identified certain hallmarks often found in speech that led to violence.

Three hallmarks common in several dangerous speech statements are :

- **Compares a group of people with animals, insects or vermin**
- **Suggests that the audience faces a serious threat or violence from another group ("accusation in a mirror")**
- **Suggests that some people from another group are spoiling the purity or integrity of the speakers' group**

Note that a speech statement can still be dangerous despite not having any of these three mentioned pillars of dangerous speech. The hallmarks serve as a diagnostic tool to identify some dangerous speech, since they are commonly (but not universally) found in it.

Also note the converse: a hallmark does not automatically make speech dangerous. As an example, if a mother tells her daughter to stop seeing a boy from another community, and calls the boy by the name of an animal, the speech is almost certainly not dangerous since the daughter will not react with violence against the boy or his community.

#### i. Compare a group of people with animals, insects or a derogatory term, especially in mother tongue

Before the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the Hutus used the term "inyenzi" (cockroaches) to demean the Tutsis to less than human beings [4]. Psychological research suggests that it was easier for the Hutus to harm the Tutsis since they thought of them as mere insects.

In Kenya, atop using animal and insect names, our communities also have particular insults in vernacular language that are intended to demean certain groups. The names we have come across from the blogs and sites we are monitoring include:

*kigeugeu, nugu, pigs, jigger infested, vultures, hyenas, dogs/maumbwa, chinkororo, madoadoa, kihii, black monkeys, nyang'au, snakes, weevils, cockroaches, cannibals, warthogs, headless chicken, siafu, rumbwa, blind donkeys, dinosaurs, nzi, baboon, wakwitu, maggots, nyani, kombamwiko*

## ii. Suggest that some people are spoiling the purity or integrity of the group

Of the five ethnic communities we are monitoring, all are known to possess certain characteristics and/or perform certain socio-cultural activities that define them, e.g. Luos fish, Kikuyus run businesses, Kalenjins are pastoralists, Somalis trade and Luhyas are farmers.

However, in our research we found that commenters use these stereotypes negatively or state other negative stereotypes as truths against these communities. This category contains comments that use historically negative stereotypes to suggest that the targeted community is impure to the audience. Also, comments that we found from our research exhibited calls to remove these 'impure' groups from the society.

Examples follow:

*"..wats wrong wid ths community? God wat r u waitin for wid ths evil,heartles,assasins in kenya? please clear 4 us this whole Gomorra and sodom of kenya we are tired kindly!"*

*"m3 c mkabila but u [tribe] should b cast uota dis wald,,,,,,U R SHITTT STUCK IN OUR BUTTS EVRYDAY"*

*"We dont want madoadoa including [...] COUNTY!!"*

*" we are beginning to think that this [subtribe] shouldint have been grouped in our comunity they resembles the [tribe] even their language doesnt match ours"*

## iii. Suggest that the audience faces a serious threat or violence from another group

Another indicator of a statement has the potential to promote violence is when the statement suggests that the audience should equip themselves because another group will attack them. Often, these comments are not based on truth but are instead intended to invoke fear in the audience so that they can defend themselves against the claimed violence.

These statements often promote mistruths against the targeted community so that the audience can move to act against that community in the name of defending themselves.

Examples from our data follow,

*"Killing all [political party] leaders is the only way to prevent further loss of innocent lives!!!"*

*it wil b either you kil or get killed.*



Moderately dangerous speech, as well as offensive speech, are of concern due to the fact that they fuel negative sentiment that already exists in the audience.

Instead of encouraging the audience to live in harmony with other groups, they provide fodder to those that already discriminate the targeted group.

This in the long run can result in the audience acting out violently due to these negative sentiments that have been accumulating over time.

***“From the little spark may burst a mighty flame”***

***- Dante***

## How Do You Identify Dangerous Speech?

### 3. Contains a call to action

Dangerous speech often encourages the audience to condone or commit violent acts on the targeted group. The six calls to action common in dangerous speech are, calls to:

- discriminate,
- loot,
- riot,
- beat,
- forcefully evict, and
- kill.

Examples that we collected between October 2012 and January 2013 follow,

#### Calls to discriminate

*"This [tribe] men who are always getting kichapo from women wanatuambia nini. Thank God am able to befriend [tribe1] and we are in agreement tht [tribe2] is a common enemy"*

*"The biggest insecurity in kenya is caused by the [tribe] forget the alshabaab."*

*"Its BETTER FOR A [tribe1]/[tribe2] TO RULE KENYA FOR 10000YRS, THAN [tribe3] RULING FÔR 2 SECS"*

#### Calls to loot

*"[tribe] wahame nyanza and their businesses should be grounded to ashes."*

*"[tribe] tukishidwa i know we must ngoa reli, rusha mawe, choma maduka ya kununua maziwa, kuchoma tyre bararabara"*

#### Calls to riot

*"I urge [location] residents 2 fight on for their rights for security bcoz thats what govt like"*

*"Turushe mawe kabisaa hadi mungu wetu [presidential candidate] aje atwambie tuache. Sisi ni Sirkali!"*

*"kwani twangojani?si tuanze fujo?Mimi ni mwanamke bt kazi ntakayoifanya mtapenda;;;i hate Kenyanz;;;i hate ... (land grabbers)"*

#### Calls to beat

*"Wapigwe kama walivyokanyagwa watu huku elgon."*

*"Crush these guys"*

*"Once [political candidate] becomes the next prez [tribe] will be so emasculated that you will not eat humans 4 fun but 4 your survival---mutanyoroshwa!"*

## Calls to Forcefully Evict

*"Mixing [tribe1] and [tribe2] will not work,lazima IDPS watoke Rift valley."*

*"My dream is to see a [tribe]less kenya ,no aids,no stones no uhiis,"*

*"kila mtu arudi kwao wageni wengine apana wanatuaribia boma"*

*"[tribe] WAHAME NYANZA waende... mko wengi na hamna makao shame on you."*

*"If mzalendo kibunja wants me, let him arrest me but i think we push this [tribe] out of easleigh and kenya if the government cannot do it for us. We cannot live in fear on our land, and the cause of the fear is a refugee."*

## Calls to Kill

*"They deserve Twa! Twa! Twa! Twa! Twa! Twa! Twa! Twa!"*

*"wachomwelwachinjwe!"*

*"i will get out from it when all \$ i mean all [tribe] will be in the grave!!!"*

*"Bullets need 2 be used in [town1] and [town2] for these goons 2 straighten-up"*

*"..... KENYA SI YA [tribe]... this time try you will see we will slaughter you...."*

*"A bullet should be put into the skull of this dog called [tribe]...."*

## Relationship between Events on the Ground and Online Dangerous Speech

We have observed that most dangerous speech occurs as a response to events that happen on the ground. These events come to the attention of the commenters mainly through traditional and online media reporting.

The media therefore, plays a vital role in highlighting what topics are discussed online and suggests that responsible reporting by media houses, whether in newspapers, online or on radio, may shape the type of conversations that form around those reported topics.

The Umati team encourages the media to steer clear of sensationalist reporting especially around highly volatile national events such as referenda and general elections.

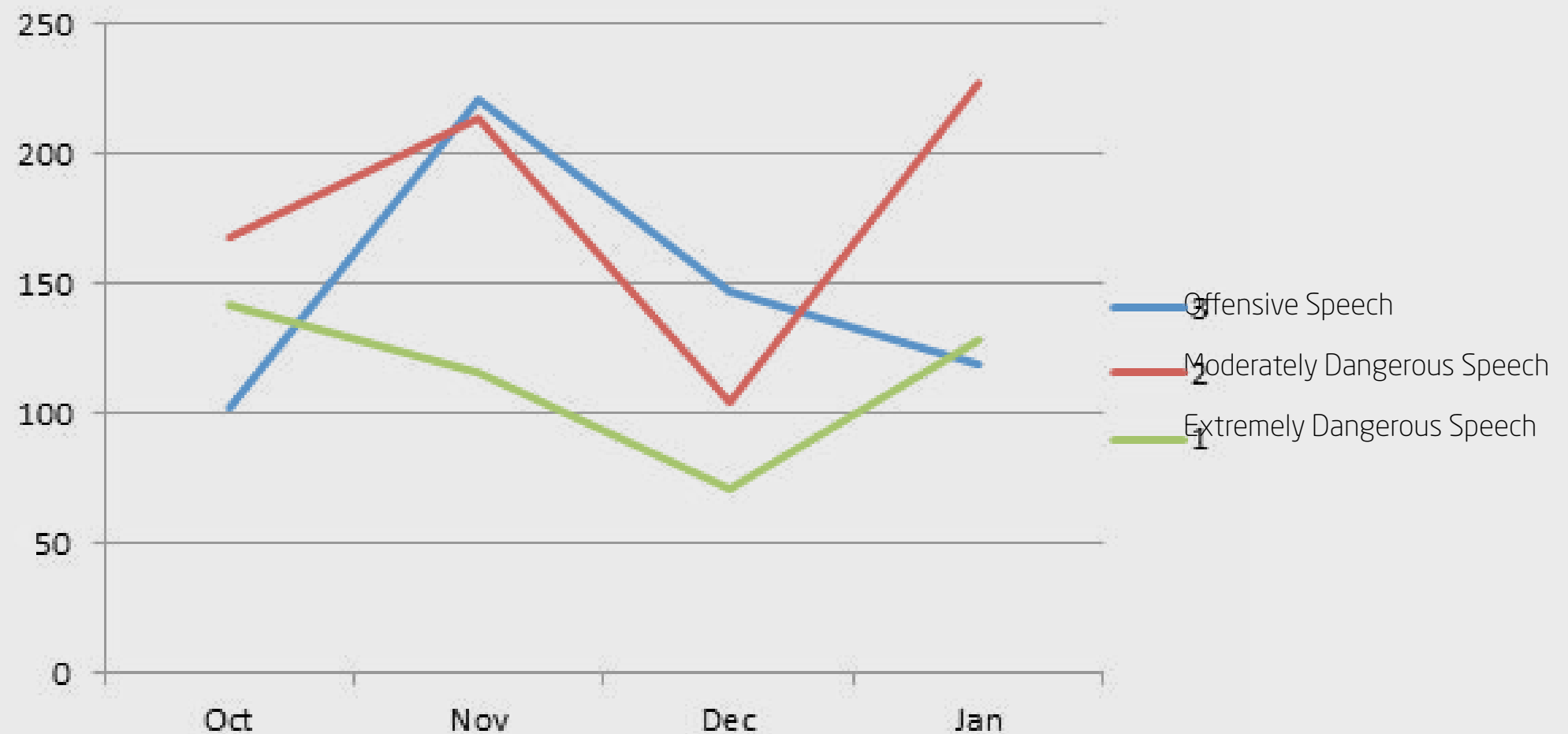
Notable events between October 2012 and January 2013 that contributed to a spike in extremely dangerous speech are:

- Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) and the war against Somalia
- December 2012 matatu strike
- Grenade attacks
- A mention by Raila Odinga that PNU tampered with ODM plans
- ODM and TNA rivalry
- Opinion polls by Infotrak/IPSOS
- 2013 General Election campaigns
- Cattle rustlers in Tana
- ICC suspects
- Gor Mahia fans losing game
- Party Nominations
- The potential that Kenya will face sanctions if Uhuru Kenyatta becomes President

The highest contributor to online dangerous speech is the upcoming 2013 general elections and the politics and campaigns surrounding it.

## Interesting Trends between October 2012 and January 2013

### 1. Probable declining incidence of extremely dangerous speech



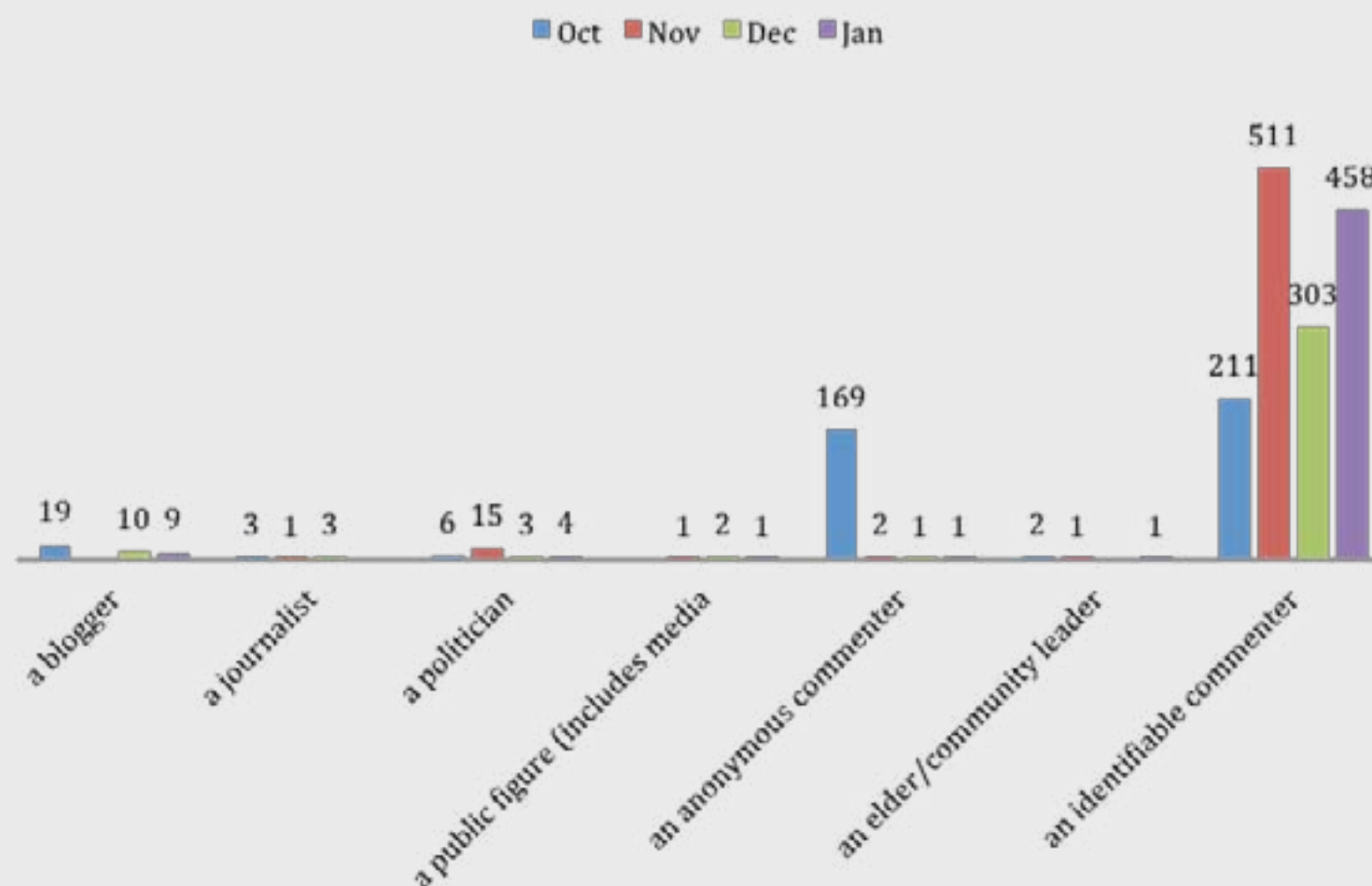
Between November and January, Umati saw a declining number of extremely dangerous speech statements (category 3 statements).

The drop in December can possibly be attributed to the Christmas holiday break.

Additional data from the month of February will need to be analysed in order to conclude that there is a declining rate of dangerous speech as we near elections.

## Interesting Trends between October 2012 and January 2013

### 2. Identifiable commenters are the most active users of dangerous speech



Surprisingly, the highest use of dangerous speech from the Kenyan online space that Umati is monitoring is by identifiable commenters.

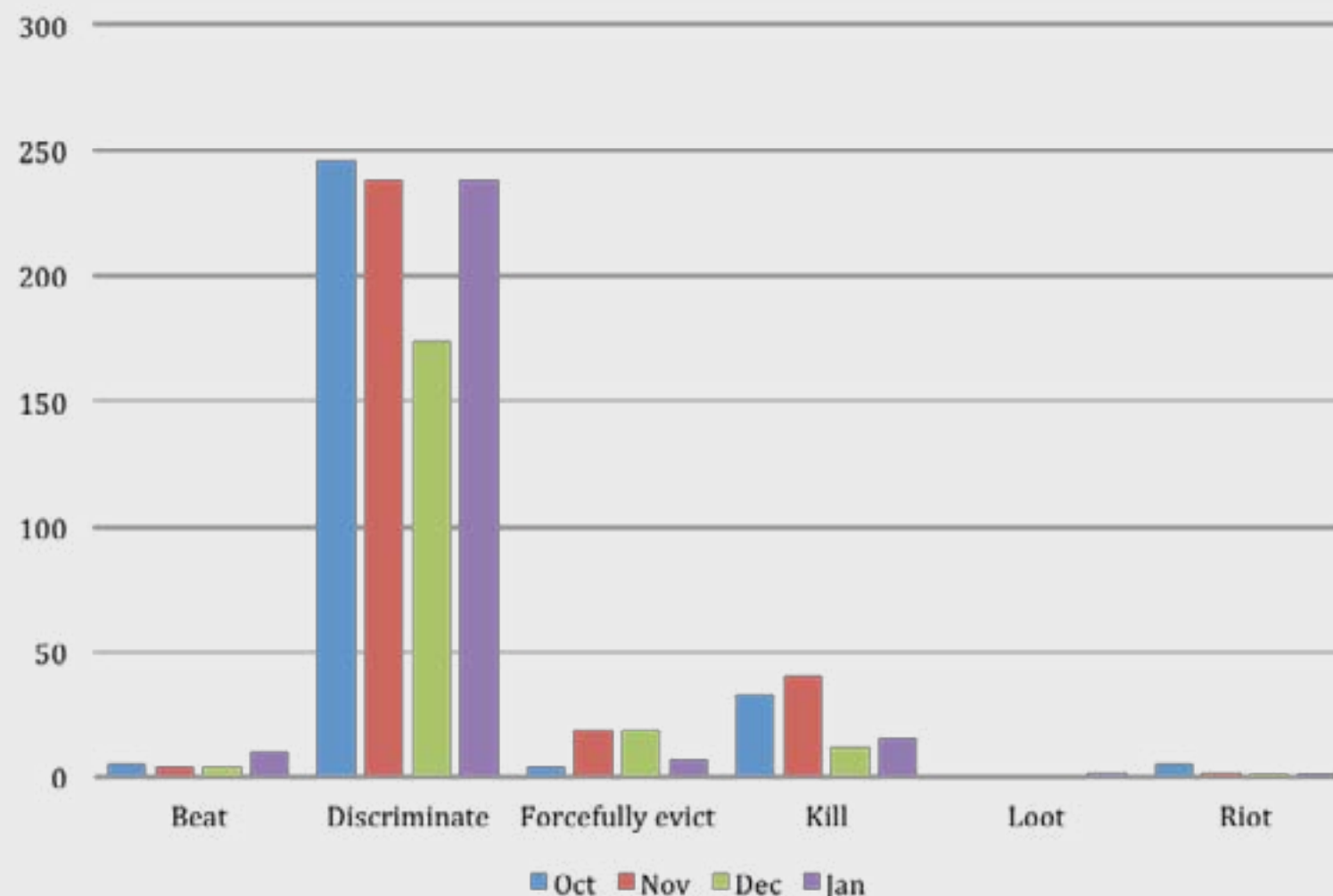
Identifiable commenters are online users who leave comments in response to a Facebook post, an online news article, a forum or blog post.

They are identifiable in that they use their own name or a pseudo name.

The lack of caution when speaking online suggests that the speakers are not considering the negative impact their statements could have, nor are they worried about being associated with the dangerous statements they make.

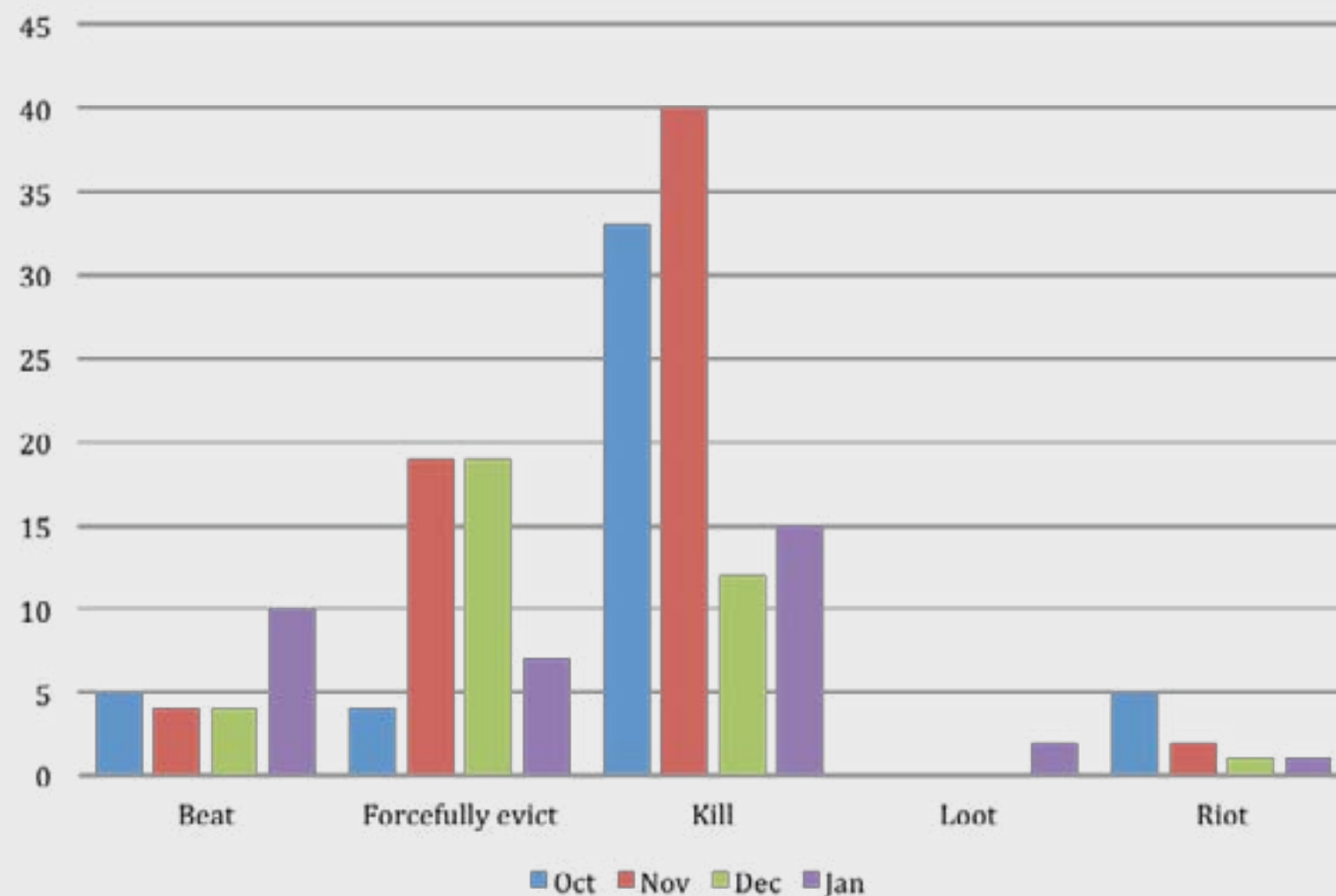
## Interesting Trends between October 2012 and January 2013

### 3. Most noted call to action is the call to discriminate



Constantly across each month, from October to January, the most frequent call to action is the call to discriminate other groups.

Also, if we look at the same data minus the calls to discriminate, calls to kill stand out prominently more than other calls to violence, as shown below.



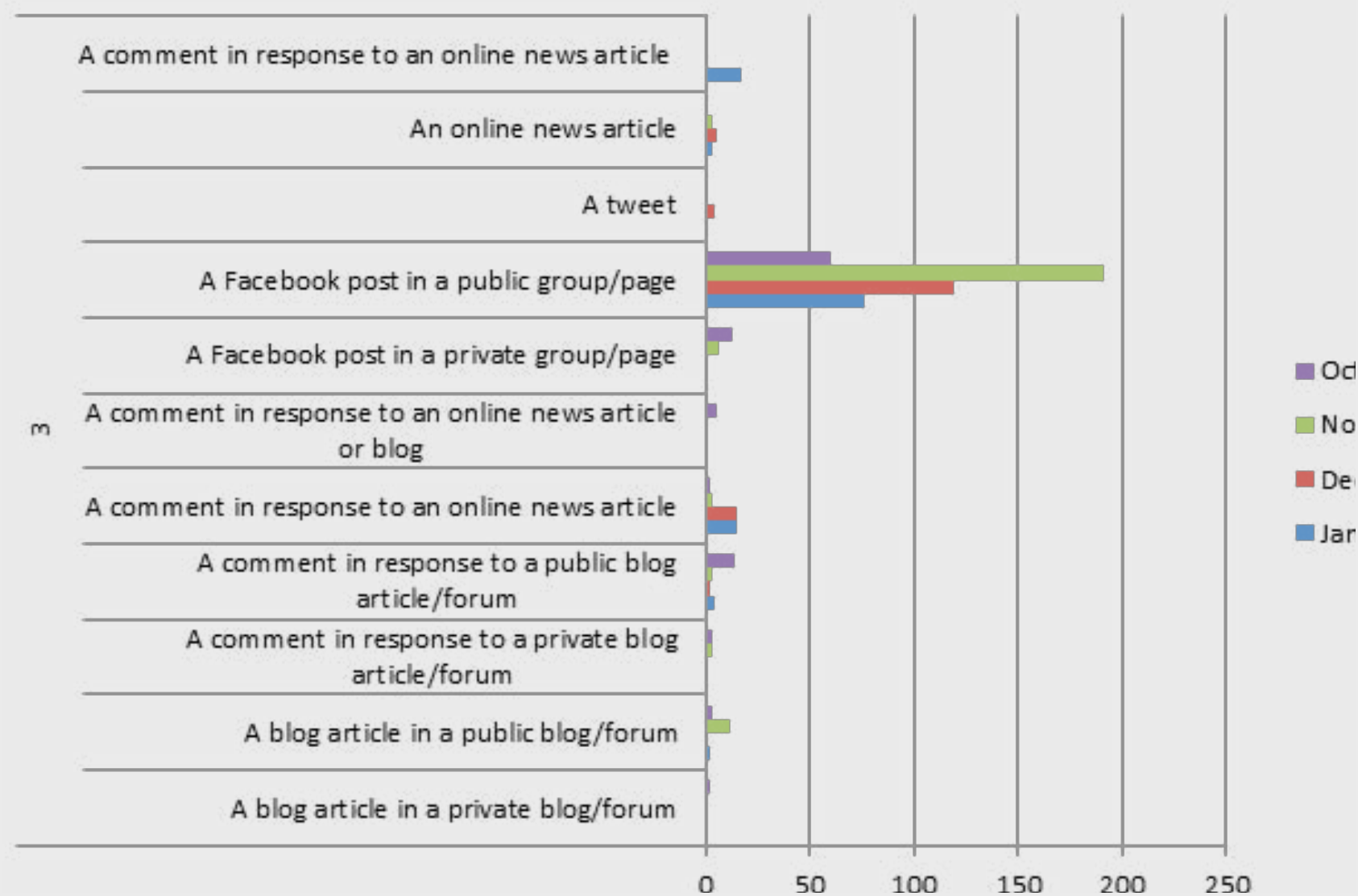
This highlights an interesting behaviour in dangerous speech conversations; calls to discriminate which are the least harmful amongst the calls to action, are the most frequent in the online space, while calls to kill, which are the most harmful calls to action, are the second most frequent calls to action.

## Interesting Trends between October 2012 and January 2013

### 4. Most dangerous speech incidents were found on Facebook

Facebook has proven to be the online space where most online users prefer to engage in dangerous speech.

The graph below looks at extremely dangerous speech (category 3) only, and here we see the clear lead activity on Facebook has across all three months.





**What can \*YOU do?**

## What can YOU do?

Professor Susan Benesch has identified four ways through which dangerous speech can be addressed. Whether you are the Government, the Media, an online content creator, an online content reader, a journalist, lawyer, student or any other Kenyan citizen, you have a significant role to play in preventing the escalation of violence in Kenya during this sensitive election period.

You can...

### I. Silence the speaker

This is a role currently played by governing bodies in which the speaker of dangerous speech is prosecuted. The Ministry of Information and Communication, through the Permanent Secretary Bitange Ndemo, has already announced that blogs found to contain hate speech will be closed and the perpetrators fined and/or jailed.

Similar prosecution will be given to those who spread hate messages via SMS and the media.

As a responsible citizen, you can report incidences of dangerous speech, whether online or offline, to the Umati team via the following link: [HTTP://bit.ly/umatikenya](http://bit.ly/umatikenya)

This will help the team gather information necessary to report to the relevant authorities and thus prevent further escalation of violence on the ground.

### II. Limit the medium of dissemination of dangerous speech

This too has been implemented by governing bodies in Kenya, namely CCK, who have limited the means of spreading dangerous speech by monitoring SMSs and radio stations. However, the challenge here is that like an amoeba, once one part is cut, another quickly grows. Dangerous speech may move from the monitored media to others like whatsapp groups, private Facebook pages and face-to-face meetings.

Once way that the responsible Kenyan can limit the means of dissemination online is by unfollowing or unfriending those you believe are engaging in dangerous speech.

## What can YOU do?

### III. Empower the audience to be immune to incitement

The Umati team favours this approach as it gives power to the audience. By defining what dangerous speech is, two goals are met:

- the mwananchi (citizen) is able to identify which comments/statements are dangerous and is then able to react responsibly to these statements.
- by educating the public on exactly what kind of speech has harmful effects on the community, the public is then able to freely engage in the speech that is not harmful; defining and empowering the public to correctly identify dangerous speech, which further increases their freedom of expression.

Umati does this by conducting outreach events with online content creators and the general public in order to promote education on dangerous speech.

There are several ways one can choose to react to dangerous speech:

- the audience can choose to ignore the statement;
- the audience can choose not to react to the statement;
- the audience can in turn educate the speaker to engage in speech that is not dangerous;
- the audience can offer correct information so the others are encouraged to react peacefully.

### IV. Discredit the speaker's utterances

One way to point out that a dangerous speech statement is false, is by pointing out the truth. Content creators, whether bloggers, journalists, Twitter and Facebook users, or media personalities have the responsibility to provide correct information to the public.

Such responsible online activity was exemplified during the Mombasa violence that followed the death of Muslim cleric Sheikh Aboud Rogo, when inflammatory tweets were being spread that stated that a Mombasa church was being burned. A responsible social media user took a tweetpic of the church (which was not burning) and stated, "Stop the lies!". This responsible action helped to quell the propagation of such inflammatory lies on social media.

Such spreading of correct information has the potential to lead the audience to react peacefully to an utterance intended to incite them to violence. NipeUkweli (Give me Truth) is an outreach initiative calling for communities (bloggers, community radio, traditional media, and grassroots groups) to help discredit the lies and rumors expressed both online and offline.

# Act now!



## Notes

**Discrimination:** 'Discrimination' is understood as any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, age, economic position, property, marital status, disability, or any other status, that has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition or exercise, on an equal footing, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field of public life. Source: La Rue, F., (2012, September 7). Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, UN Doc A/67/357, p12.

**Dangerous speech:** This is a term coined by Professor Susan Benesch to describe incitement to collective violence that has a reasonable chance of succeeding, in other words speech that may help to catalyse violence, due to its content and also the context in which it is made or disseminated. This possibility can be gauged by studying five criteria that may contribute to the dangerousness of speech in context: the speaker (and his/her degree of influence over the audience most likely to react, the audience (and its susceptibility to inflammatory speech), the speech act itself, the historical and social context, and the means of dissemination (which may give greater influence or "force" to the speech).

**Identifiable Commenter:** A person who responds to an online article, blog post or Facebook post who can be identified by a name, regardless of whether the name is real or fake.

## SOURCES

[1] National Cohesion and Integration Act, 2008, Art. 13. <http://www.cohesion.or.ke/images/downloads/national%20cohesion%20and%20integration%20act%202008.pdf>

[2] Constitution of Kenya, Art 33(2)(c).

[3] Political Parties Act of 2011, First Schedule.

[4] Mitchell, N. First we call them insects: the prelude to horror 26th April 2012. Available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-04-26/mitchell-first-we-call-them-insects/3969192>

For further information and articles on the hallmarks and on Dangerous Speech generally, see [www.voicesthatpoison.org](http://www.voicesthatpoison.org)



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