HATELEX:
A LEXICON
OF HATE SPEECH
TERMS IN KENYA

NATIONAL
COHESION AND
INTEGRATION
COMMISSION
KENYA

PAMOJA

HARAMBEE

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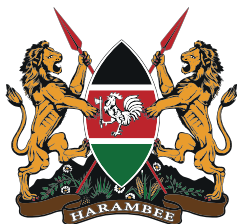
> Death and life are in the power of the tongue.
>
> Proverbs 18:21

> Wars are not fought for territory, but for words. Man's deadliest weapon is language. He is susceptible to being hypnotized by slogans as he is to infectious diseases. And where there is an epidemic, the group mind takes over.
>
> Arthur Koestler

> Auschwitz was built not with stones, but words.
>
> Abraham Joshua Heschel

> Words are some of the most powerful and important things I know ... Language is the tool of hope and the weapon of hatred. It's the bright red warning flag of danger and the stone foundation of diplomacy and peace.
>
> Ani DiFranco

Abbreviations and Acronyms

FGD	Focus Group Discussions
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission
NCI Act	National Cohesion and Integration Act

FOREWORD

One of the major tasks currently upon our shoulders at the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, is to ensure a peaceful general election in August 2022. With only five months to go, we are still being bogged down by dangerous communication and the use of hate words both in our public spaces such as funerals, political campaigns and press releases, as well as the social media space.

We have therefore taken the bull by its horns through this exercise of identifying terms and coded language that have been commonly used in Kenya's political landscape with the intent to incite violence against various communities of differing political stances.

This lexicon identifies hate speech terms and coded language that have the potential to incite violence between two or more ethnic communities in Kenya. It is however worth noting that all terms must be analyzed within their own contexts.

This is therefore to acknowledge that this Lexicon is not a comprehensive list of hate speech terms in Kenya. In fact, new terms may emerge, neutral terms may be corrupted to implicate hate and the terms indicated in this lexicon may be used in innocent contexts as well.

As such, this remains a living document since the terms and coded language shall be regularly updated for use in the social media tracking of the National cohesion and Integration Commission. Speakers of these terms and users of the identified coded language shall be identified and listed on the wall of shame as we head towards the 2022 General Elections. I urge all organizations undertaking social media monitoring to use this list in their efforts to track hate speech. We are also open to consulting with them on any emerging words and statement which we can build into this lexicon moving forward.

The terms shall also be shared continually with the public in order to enhance their readiness and resilience against manipulation and polarization by political leaders and other influential persons including artists, religious and local leaders and any other individuals whose intent is to incite communities against others.

REV. DR. SAMUEL KOBIA, CBS
Chairman, National Cohesion and Integration Commission

BACKGROUND

The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) is a statutory body established under the National Cohesion and Integration Act No.12 of 2008 (NCI Act). The establishment of NCIC recognized the need for a national institution to promote national identity and values, mitigate ethno-political competition and ethnically motivated violence, eliminate discrimination on ethnic, racial and religious basis and promote national reconciliation and healing. The mandate of NCIC as provided for in Section 25(1) of the NCI Act is to facilitate and promote equality of opportunity, good relations, harmony and peaceful co-existence between persons of the different ethnic, racial and religious communities of Kenya, and to advise the Government on all aspects thereof.

INTRODUCTION

Communication between people is rapidly evolving, particularly due to the exponential growth of the use of social media. Being a democratic country with a relatively large civic space, Kenyans have the freedom of expressing their opinions and feelings. Unfortunately, there are extreme expressions of verbal violence and their proliferation in physical spaces and social media.

It is equally common in Kenya to find language used in a manner that would not be easy for people from other ethnic communities to understand. Sometimes language would be used in such a bizarre manner that even members of the same linguistic community who do not share specific codes would not understand the underlying meanings and intentions. This use of language in a manner intended to conceal the normal meanings of words, phrases or sentences is what we shall generally refer to in this study as coded language.

It has also been noted that while several Kenyan communities have lived relatively peacefully, in spite of the existence of the use of stereotypes and/or coded language, there are moments when some people (usually unscrupulous leaders) deliberately use stereotypes and/or coded language to talk ill of, spread fear of, show contempt about and/or invoke strong feelings of hate against other individuals, groups or entire communities. Hate speech is perpetuated when stereotypes and/or coded language are used to advance hate by inner communities of certain target communities.

The National Cohesion and Integration Act defines hate speech as "the use of threatening, inciting, abusive or insulting words or behaviors, or display of written material with the intention of stirring ethnic hatred. This infers that any communication that provokes hate against a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins amounts to hate speech.

RATIONALE

Kenya went through a patch of social disharmony between December 27th 2007 and February 28th 2008, a period which is referred to as 'the worst period in Kenya's history'. During this period, Kenya witnessed the worst post-election violence in the history of the country. More than one thousand Kenyans lost their lives and hundreds of thousands were displaced. The post-election violence largely ceased from being a conflict between politicians or even political parties to being a conflict between different Kenyan communities. It is worth noting that some of these communities had before then lived relatively peacefully. There had been some pockets of inter-ethnic violence in Kenya associated with political elections; but the magnitude of violence witnessed during the 2007/2008 post-election period was evidently unprecedented.

Several reasons have been attributed to the causes of the post-election violence. But one of the notable triggers to the 2007/8 post-election violence has been the use of hate speech (characterised by stereotypes and coded language). It has been argued, noted and observed that during the build-up to the post-election violence, some leaders whipped massive hate between different Kenyan communities which exploded into massive

violence. It is of concern that while the existence and use of stereotypes and coded language by members of various Kenyan ethnic communities (inner) to advance hate speech against other communities (target) is common, usually resulting in different forms of violence.

Therefore, it is against this background that NCIC, as a national Commission whose mandate is primarily to "facilitate and promote equality of opportunity, good relations, harmony and peaceful coexistence between persons of different ethnic and racial backgrounds in Kenya and to advice the government thereof" carried out the present study.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this work is to develop a lexicon of hate words that can be used as a resource to identify and analyze hate speech in physical spaces and social media texts in a multilingual perspective.

Specifically, the study seeks to:
1. Explore the commonly used coded hate speech terms in Kenya
2. Establish how the coded terms are perceived by the users
3. Ascertain how these coded terms are perceived by the target communities

METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed methods approach where qualitative data was collected through FGDs and the quantitative data through an online survey which included 523 respondents. There were four focus group discussions which brought people from the following regions; Western & Nyanza; Rift Valley; Nairobi, Central & Eastern; North eastern and Coast. Each FGD brought together 50 participants who engaged in mini FGDs of 12-15 people each. These engagements provided a deeper analysis of the subject at hand. A total of 187 people participated in the four focus group discussions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

A survey showed that the primary need for all Kenyans during the 2002 General Election cycle is peace. It therefore goes without saying that most Kenyans do not want a recurrence of the unfortunate incidents that took place in the 2007/8 post-election violence. Consequently, the NCIC and other relevant bodies were formed to devise strategies of enhancing harmony among Kenyan communities, among other roles.

The concern with ethnic stereotypes and coded language in Kenya generally and specifically stems from the fact that it is commonly used in the context of political campaigns to rally support of members of inner communities (and sometimes other communities) against target communities. This kind of support is commonly intended to enable some preferred candidates to succeed in political contests or when they feel threatened (e.g. when facing possible prosecution or sacking from currently held positions).

The primary purpose of this study is to identify a lexicon employed by influential people to incite violence on one part of the population (some ethnic groups) against another (other ethnic groups). These words can also be monitored on social media and physical spaces like social gatherings, media outlets etc. to determine which terms are being used, by which groups, and for what purpose. In this way, the lexicon can identify possible sources of and potential trends in violence, and its potential targets.

The study identified terms and heavily coded messages that can be used to incite hatred and deliberately exclude other communities in various languages including English, Kiswahili, Sheng' Kikuyu, Meru, and Kalenjin languages among others.

ENGLISH TERMS

Commonly Used Hate Term	Translation	Target Community	User Community	Meaning
Fumigation	the action or process of disinfecting or purifying an area with the fumes of certain chemicals	Non-locals	Locals	Mete violence on non-locals so that they can vacate the area
Uncircumcised	It is said of a boy or man who is not circumcised.	Communities seen to be opposing the political party	Politicians	Referred to communities which traditionally did not embrace circumcision as their rite of passage e.g. the Luo, Turkana etc.
Eliminate	completely remove or get rid of (something)	Communities perceived to support the dominant political party in the area in question	Communities seen to support opposing political parties	Kill members of the community which is perceived not to support the dominant political party
Kill	Cause the death of a person, animal, or other living thing.	Communities perceived to be on different political sides	Communities perceived to be on different political sides	Mentions of killing an entire community because it is perceived to support an opposition party.

SWAHILI TERMS

Commonly Used Hate Term	Translation	Target Community	User Community	Meaning
Kaffir	Derived from Arabic term Kafir which means disbeliever or one who conceals the truth.	Non Muslims	Muslims	A negative referent majorly referring to the non-Muslim communities.
Madoadoa	dots	Non- locals	Political aspirants and supporters of the dominant political party in an area	Used to refer to people who are non- locals living in a place dominantly known to be inhabited by a certain community. Considered as a way of inciting one tribe against the other
Chunga Kura	Secure the vote	Political aspirants and supporters of the less dominant political party in an area	Political aspirants and supporters of the dominant political party in an area	This statement is perceived as a rallying call by the political party to ensure that there will be rigging and voters should police the process on the poll day. If people, not mandated to be observers, political party agents or any other functionaries, remain in the polling stations during the poll day, it may portend a recipe for violence.
Mende	Cockroach	Local communities seen to support the less dominant political party/ies in the area	Political aspirants and supporters of the dominant political party in an area	This terms together with others (particularly insects) are used jointly with fumigation referring to the evacuation or violence against the communities perceived not to support the dominant party in an area.

SWAHILI TERMS

Commonly Used Hate Term	Translation	Target Community	User Community	Meaning
Watu wa kurusha mawe	People who throw stones	The Luo	Political aspirants/ influential people	Refers to a community that is perceived to resolve their disputes by attacking others using stones.
Watajua hawajui	They will know that they do not know	Political aspirants and supporters of the less dominant political party in an area	Political aspirants and supporters of the dominant political party in an area	This statement is perceived that the opponents daring a party on an issue will be surprised by the vicious nature of responses they will meet in return.
Wabara waende kwao	People from off the coast should go back to their homes	Coastal communities	Non-Coastal Communities	This statement refers to individuals and tribes who come from upcountry and are not indigenous to the Coast.Upcountry communities, return to your counties of origin.
Wakuja	Those that come	Immigrant communities	Local communities that consider themselves native to an area	This term refers to communities that migrated and settled into an area.
Chinja Kafir	Kill the infidel	Security agents (mostly)	Communities in the Coastal area.	Statements used to provoke young men to kill law enforcement officials (police or the army).
Kwekwe	Weeds	Political aspirants and supporters of the less dominant political party in an area	Political aspirants and supporters of the dominant political party in an area	It may be used to mean that there are strangers who are a threat within the community hence should be eliminated.

SHENG' TERMS

Commonly Used Hate Term	Translation	Target Community	User Community	Meaning
Kama noma, noma. Kama mbaya, mbaya	If it is bad, then it is bad.	Political aspirants and perceived supporters of the less dominant political party in an area	Political aspirants and supporters of the dominant political party in an area	This statement is perceived by communities that if an opposing political party plays foul, then party supporters should unleash the severest form of counterattack.
Hatupangwingwi	No one can arrange us	Specific families & communities that have been in power for long particularly the Luo, and Kikuyu.	Political aspirants from families/ communities that have not been at the center of power in the past	This statement is used to underscore the fact that some families/ communities have been at the periphery of national leadership and influence for so long and they no longer want to remain out.
Operation Linda Kura	Secure the vote	Political aspirants and supporters of the less dominant political party in an area	Political aspirants and supporters of the dominant political party in an area	This statement is perceived as a rallying call by the political party to ensure that there will be rigging and voters should police the process on the poll day. If people, not mandated to be observers, political party agents or any other functionaries, remain in the polling stations during the poll day, it may portend a recipe for violence.

KIKUYU TERMS

Commonly Used Hate Term	Translation	Target Community	User Community	Meaning
Kihii	Uncircumcised man	Referred to communities which traditionally did not embrace circumcision as their rite of passage e.g. the Luo, Turkana etc.	Kikuyu	Demeaning word used against political aspirants from some communities such as the Luo community with the aim to humiliate and terrorize not just the individual men, but their entire communities.
Uthamaki ni witu	The Kingdom is ours	Non-Kikuyu communities	Kikuyu	This term refers to the notion that the Kikuyu are and should remain the ruling class. It is used in reference to national leadership which is said to belong to the Kikuyu community and not any other community.

MERU TERMS

Common stereotypes	Translation	Target Community	User Community	Meaning
Mwiji	Uncircumcised man	Referred to communities which traditionally did not embrace circumcision as their rite of passage e.g. the Luo, Turkana etc.	Kikuyu	Demeaning word used against political aspirants from some communities such as the Luo community with the aim to humiliate and terrorize not just the individual men, but their entire communities.

KALENJIN TERMS

Commonly Used Hate Term	Translation	Target Community	User Community	Meaning
Kimurkeldet	Brown teeth	Kikuyu	Kalenjin	This is a derogatory term referring to a person with brown teeth with the implication that they cannot even undertake personal hygiene effectively.
Otutu labotonik	uproot the weed	Non-Kalenjin communities	Kalenjin	It may be used to mean that there are strangers who are a threat within the community hence should be eliminated.
Ngetiik	Uncircumcised	Luo	Boys	Demeaning word used against political aspirants from some communities such as the Luo community with the aim to humiliate and terrorize not just the individual men, but their entire communities.

CONCLUSION

Given the dynamic nature of communication and the possibility for perpetrators to shun words that have been listed publicly, this list shall be updated regularly and shared with Kenyans.

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