What is a hate crime?

A tagged car, a broken store window or a stolen cane may at first all seem like random acts of violence until we look at the **motivation behind them**. The car that was tagged, belonged to a lesbian couple known in the neighbourhood; the store is owned by a black man and is a meeting place for the city's African community; and the cane was taken from a blind person to have a little laugh over his confusion.

All these acts have something in common: they are motivated by **prejudice, bias and hostility** against a certain group of people. They are acts that attack one's **core identity** – something that they can't necessarily change or hide. **Parts of core identity are for example skin colour, ethnic origin, nationality, language, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or age**.

When these kinds of acts constitute a crime, they are called **hate crimes**, but more broadly, we can refer to them as **bias motivated incidents**. These incidents have a deep impact on the survivors, as their core identity is attacked. You can replace your stolen wallet with a new one, but you cannot alter who you are - and why should you do that in the first place? This is why hate crime needs special attention.

1 out of 4 LGBT people say they have been attacked or threatened with violence in the past five years

Incidents motivated by homophobia, racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance or other prejudice happen more frequently than we realise. For example, in Europe, as many as 1 out of 4 LGBT people say they have been attacked or threatened with violence in the past five years, while almost 30% of Jewish people feel they have been harassed.

Imagine having to fear for your safety or the safety of your loved ones every time you step outside...

30%

of Jewish people feel they have been harassed

Bias motivated incidents also **affect society** as a whole. The more we look away, the more we normalise prejudiced and hateful behaviour. Without condemnation and real consequences, what begins with an angry slur, can escalate into acts that are much worse – property damage or even physical attacks. Hostile attitudes destabilise society and make it **more unsafe for everyone**.
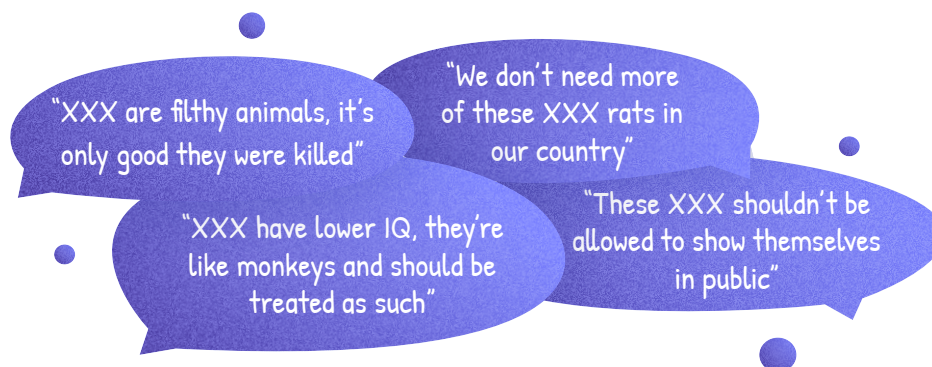
So next time you see or experience something that you think might be a hate crime or a bias motivated incident, **let someone know**. **Report it to the police or notify the Latvian Centre for Human Rights.**

Because if you don't, perpetrators will walk away with a little bit of extra assurance that they can carry on like that.

What is hate speech?

Have you noticed statements in the media, from your friends or on social media, that say something like that:

"XXX are filthy animals, it's only good they were killed"

"We don't need more of these XXX rats in our country"

"XXX have lower IQ, they're like monkeys and should be treated as such"

"These XXX shouldn't be allowed to show themselves in public"

This is hate speech. Rooting itself into our society to the point it may go unnoticed or even be confused with freedom of speech.

But this freedom cannot be used to undermine other human rights, as hate speech humiliates and degrades people for who they are.

For their skin colour, ethnic origin, nationality, language, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or age.

Hate speech can appear everywhere. On the streets or online. It can be anonymous, expressed by someone you know or even promoted by politicians.

The worst thing is that hate speech incites hostility and violence, creating a climate in which targeted groups are more likely to face discrimination, aggression and abuse, even if the call for violence is not explicitly made.

If hate speech is not tackled in the society, it can escalate into acts that are much worse – property damage or even physical attacks.

So next time you witness hate speech, take action! If you have noticed hate speech on the Internet – report it to the administration of the website. Most of the websites and social networks have terms of service prohibiting incitement to hatred and special reporting tools. You can use these tools or report hate speech directly to the website's administrator. Latvian Centre for Human Rights can also help you with reporting online hate speech. You can also inform the police about incitement to hatred or calls to violence.

If no action is taken, oppressors will walk away with a little bit of extra assurance that they can carry on like that.

What to do if you are attacked?

If you or someone you know experience a hate incident or hate crime, you can find help and support in various different places.

You should report it to the **police** by calling **110.** Crimes aimed at incitement of racial, national, ethnic or religious hatred can be reported directly to State Security Service by calling **67208964** or by email **info@vdd.gov.lv.**

Remember that you have a right to ask for a free interpreter, invite a lawyer or your representative as well as stay informed about the course of investigation by requesting information of the person in charge of the proceedings.

Latvian Centre for Human Rights provides free-of-charge legal assistance in case of hate crimes or hate speech. Fill in the report online at **http://cilvek-tiesibas.org.lv/en/database/report-hate-crime/** or contact us by email **office@humanrights.org.lv** or phone 67039290.

Information and support for crime victims or crime witnesses is available 24h by calling **116006 or online at cietušajiem.lv**.

NGOs like **association of LGBT and their freinds "Mozaika"**, resource centre for persons with mental disability "**Zelda**" and others are also there for you.

Just let someone know. You don't have to be in this alone.

And remember: you're not a victim, you are a survivor.

**vp.gov.lv
110**

**info@vdd.gov.lv
67208964**

**cietušajiem.lv
116006**

What to do if you witness a hate crime?

Hate crimes are appalling, but each and every one of us who witnessed hate crime can help. So what can you do?

- First, make sure you are safe. Don't rush into a situation you cannot control.
- If you don't feel comfortable taking action alone, find other witnesses to come to your aid.
- Immediately call 112, so help can get there in time.
- You can also make noise to scare off the attacker or give the victim time to escape.
- To help catch the criminals, try to memorise as much information as you can. Take notes or photos if possible: the time, the place, a license plate number or an outfit can all be
- important.Also you can gather names and phone numbers of other witnesses to help the police later. Testimony, even if anonymous, can be very helpful.
- Most importantly, be there for the victim, if you can. If needed, speak to them calmly and provide assistance so you can decide on the appropriate next steps together.

No one deserves to feel unsafe, especially just for being who they are.

Help notice and report hate crime.

Also check out videos at:
tinyurl.com/naidanoziegums