

EQUALITY LABS

Caste, Race and Religious Hate Speech on Bluesky

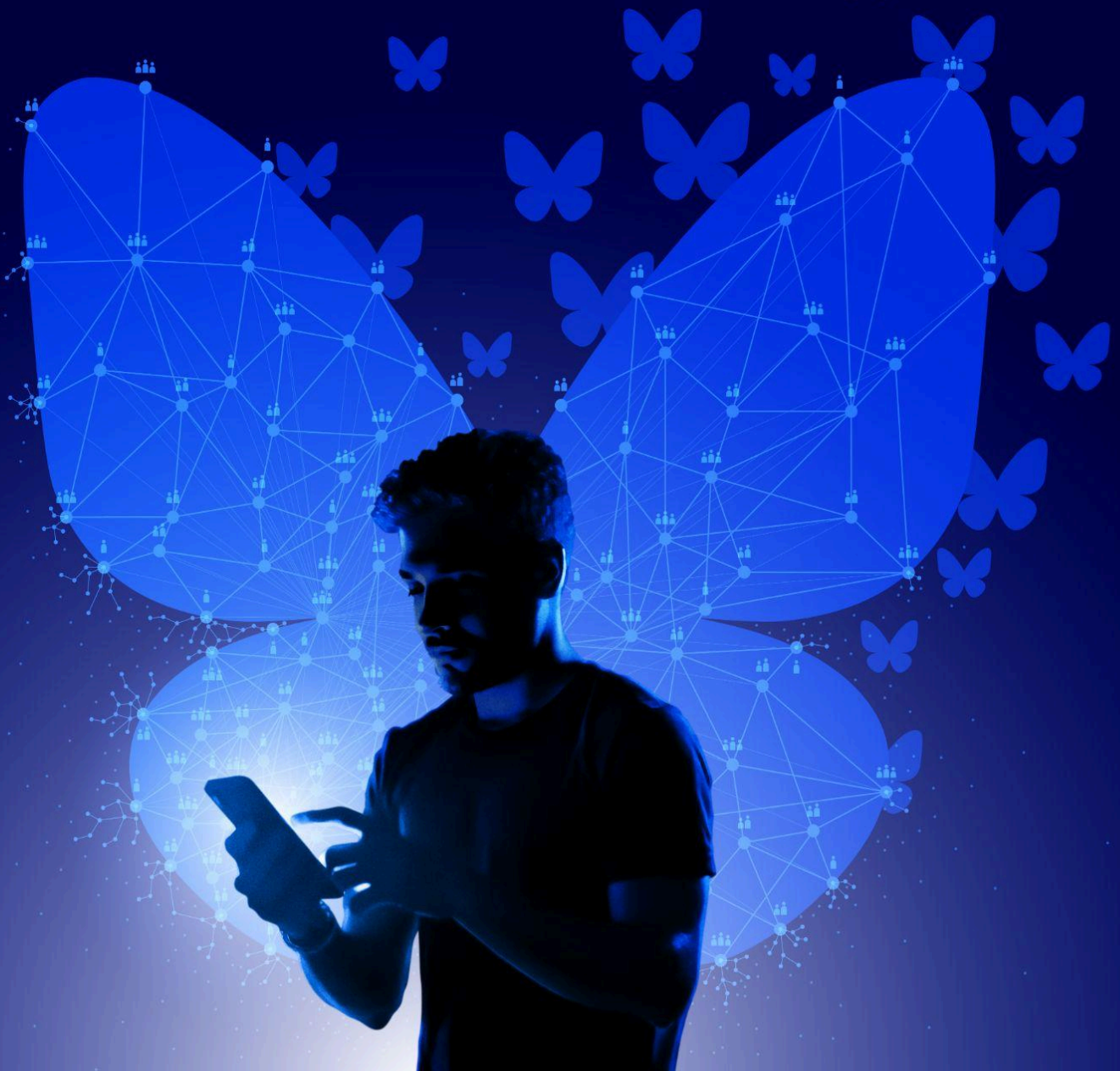


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Introduction

The recent influx of global users to the social media platform Bluesky has created significant opportunities for meaningful discourse, as users increasingly migrate from platforms like X, Threads, Instagram, and Facebook in search of alternative spaces for community building. Many users are seeking platforms that offer greater control over moderation policies—ones less influenced by the political orientation or profit-driven focus of company founders, and attend to user safety.

As this migration continues, a central challenge is ensuring culturally competent moderation, especially for global communities that have long been underserved or misrepresented. This report focuses on one of the largest minority groups online: caste-oppressed and religious minorities in South Asia and within the South Asian diaspora. Nearly one in four people worldwide is South Asian; within this population, caste and religious minorities number in the hundreds of millions. These users represent a growing, distinct demographic with unique needs and concerns that current moderation frameworks often fail to address.

As more South Asian users join Bluesky, the platform—having expressed a commitment to user safety—must proactively confront the rise of inflammatory casteist, racial, and religious hate speech. We define such speech in the [appendix](#).

To foster safer and more inclusive spaces, Bluesky should adopt moderation tools that reflect contextual understandings of power dynamics and identity. Such protections are essential to ensuring that caste-oppressed and religious minority communities from South Asia can engage freely online without fear of harassment or abuse. Further, to support culturally competent, community-driven moderation, investment in multilingual community labeling tools should be prioritized.

Executive Summary

Our research shows that South Asian users are actively exploring innovative ways to leverage Bluesky's tools to create safer spaces on the platform. Features that allow individuals to define their own experiences—such as blocking harmful phrases and abusive users—have enabled communities to build more protective environments than

those available on many other platforms. Additionally, Bluesky's decentralized, non-algorithmic design allows users greater control over the content they see; however, significant gaps remain. Our findings indicate that Islamophobic, casteist, and racist hate speech continues to circulate on the platform. To prevent the spread of such harmful content, Bluesky must strengthen its cultural competency and invest in proactive moderation strategies that account for power dynamics and structural discrimination.

Recommendations

1. Caste, which affects over 1.9 billion people globally, must be recognized as a protected category. We urge Bluesky to join platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok in explicitly including caste in its moderation policies.
2. Bluesky should adopt and enforce a zero-tolerance policy for hate speech targeting caste-oppressed and religious minority communities. This includes establishing clear guidelines on what constitutes harmful content—such as casteist slurs, religious or racial epithets, and dog whistles—with consistent enforcement, including account suspensions and content removal.
3. To ensure inclusivity and accessibility, community guidelines must be localized into all languages users are allowed to post. If Bluesky supports a language on the platform, moderation standards and policies should be available in that language.
4. The development of comprehensive slur lists specific to South Asian linguistic and cultural contexts is critical. Existing moderation tools and classifiers often reflect North American or European contexts and fail to capture harmful content in regional or coded languages. These tools should be developed in collaboration with human rights experts, scholars, and civil society organizations.
5. Cultural sensitivity training is essential for moderators. Such training should address the local contexts of caste, religious, and racial discrimination, with gender as a cross-cutting theme to address the intersectionality of online abuse—especially in cases such as gendered Islamophobia documented in this report.

6. Bluesky must also increase its trained moderation staff to address the specific challenges faced by South Asian communities. Automated detection tools often fall short in identifying hate speech when users modify spellings or use coded language. Human moderators with contextual expertise are essential.
7. In addition, Bluesky should collaborate with international and regional organizations, such as the Global Alliance Against Digital Hate and Extremism among others, to identify and take action against dangerous actors operating across platforms.
8. Finally, Bluesky must invest in Artificial Intelligence (AI) classifiers and moderation systems informed by slur databases and insights developed by regional users, plus commit to meaningful engagement with internet freedom activists, local civil society networks, and scholars with expertise in caste and religious dynamics. Such engagement is vital to build safer, more inclusive digital spaces as the platform grows and hires additional staff.

Bluesky Moderation

[Bluesky describes](#) its vision for moderation as a stackable ecosystem of services wherein users can install filters from various independent moderation services, “layering them like building blocks on top of the Bluesky app’s foundation.”

While Bluesky’s tools allow users to shape their own experiences, such as by creating safer contexts and sharing block lists in the spirit of collective care, safety cannot be outsourced solely to users. The platform itself holds a duty of care to ensure that all users—especially those from marginalized communities—are protected from harm.

As a decentralized platform still developing its policies and community guidelines, Bluesky must directly acknowledge the presence of Islamophobic, racist, and casteist content on its network. It is not enough merely to offer tools that “hide” such content from those who wish to avoid it. The platform must take proactive steps to prevent its proliferation altogether.

Though still relatively small, Bluesky is growing rapidly. In November 2024 it *had [more than 15 million users](#), up from nine million in September,*, despite having no open public

servers. This trajectory makes it inevitable that Bluesky will soon face the same scrutiny, reputational risks, and human rights consequences that have plagued platforms like Meta (Facebook), X (formerly Twitter), and others.

Bluesky has an opportunity to lead by example, embedding strong, rights-respecting moderation frameworks from the outset. It must scale up its moderation systems, invest in culturally competent practices, and implement enforceable safeguards now—before the harms outlined in this report become systemic and entrenched.

[Bluesky's "community guidelines"](#) prohibit users from "promoting hate or extremist conduct that targets people or groups based on their race, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, disability, or sexual orientation." Despite the platform's clearly stated policies, the examples documented in this report demonstrate an urgent need for Bluesky to intervene more effectively in its content moderation. Bluesky must develop a deeper understanding of the nuanced power dynamics affecting these communities across different contexts.

Furthermore, the absence of caste as a protected category leaves a major form of harmful speech without a clear mechanism for reporting or redress. We urge Bluesky to follow the lead of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok by adding caste to its moderation policies as a matter of priority.

"Free Speech, but Not Free Reach"

In one of its [public articles](#), Bluesky explains that its approach to content moderation can be described as **"free speech, but not free reach"**, meaning that while one user may post content that is controversial, others may ignore this content depending on their moderation settings. Content that violates community standards and guidelines can continue to be hosted on the platform. There is no explicit prohibition against hate speech in the [community guidelines](#), which reference prohibiting any content that promotes "hate or extremist conduct that targets people or groups based on their race, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, disability, or sexual orientation."

The question of jurisdiction is also crucial, as much of the most disturbing content also violates local laws related to hate speech and discrimination, particularly in South Asia.

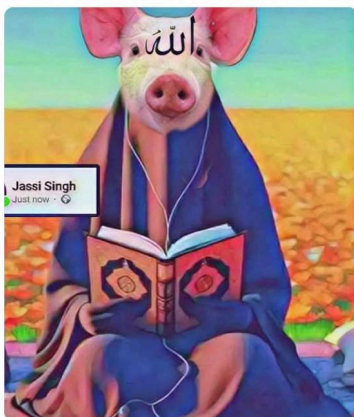
To ensure compliance with global human rights frameworks as laid out in the United Nations document, '[Countering and Addressing Online Hate Speech: A Guide for policy makers and practitioners July 2023](#)', among others, we would encourage the moderation team to meet with civil society to build competence on these issues and work to remove such content before it proliferates.

The following research documents posts containing Islamophobic, casteist, and racially discriminatory content—offering a clear warning about the types of harmful speech that are beginning to take root on Bluesky. This underscores the urgent need for the platform to take content moderation seriously, especially as many users have migrated to Bluesky from other platforms in search of a safer, less discriminatory, and less violent online environment. The goal is to prevent the refuge of Bluesky from turning into another platform that amplifies dangerous speech.

We recognize that the material presented here is disturbing and therefore present this content with a serious trigger warning. It is shared not to sensationalize, but to illustrate the severity of the issue and the immediate need for meaningful intervention.

Bluesky and Islamophobia

Below are examples of explicit Islamophobic content shared by users on Bluesky. Much of the content is in Hindi. Some of these posts are presented below with context:



Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/harish4099.bsky.social/post/3lcq5dibiss2e>

Context: The picture shows a pig with the word “Allah” written on its head and a Quran in its hand. Pigs are used as a slur against Muslims, both because they are considered dirty in general and forbidden (or “haram”) in the religion, making this post derogatory and Islamophobic.

**Link:**

<https://bsky.app/profile/ravinderchaudhary.bsky.social/post/3lcfd4rt57k24>

Context: The English translation of this text is “Love Jihadis are using matrimonial sites to trap Hindu girls: Mohammad Hussain created a profile in the name of Rahul, called a Dalit girl to meet and raped her.” The hashtag “love Jihad” is being used here to attack Muslim men, accusing Muslim men of luring non-Muslim women in order to convert them.

**Link:**

<https://bsky.app/profile/koconstructionchi.bsky.social/post/3khu25ynkw72u>

Context: This Islamophobic post uses hashtags such as “terrorists” alongside “Muslims.” The ‘I’ here refers to Muslims.

**Link:**

<https://bsky.app/profile/koconstructionchi.bsky.social/post/3kncckd2w3a2g>

Context: The post depicts Muslims as propagators of 'Sharia' (Islamic) law. The phrase "go home" is commonly directed at Muslims across the globe.



Islam is dangerous for the whole world.
Islam is giving shelter to terrorism.
Islam is proving fatal for mankind.



+ Follow

Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/poojabhakar.bsky.social/post/3lcz6dbovgc24>

Context: This post is Islamophobic and makes discriminatory statements about Islam, including connecting Islam as a religion to terrorism.

**Link:**

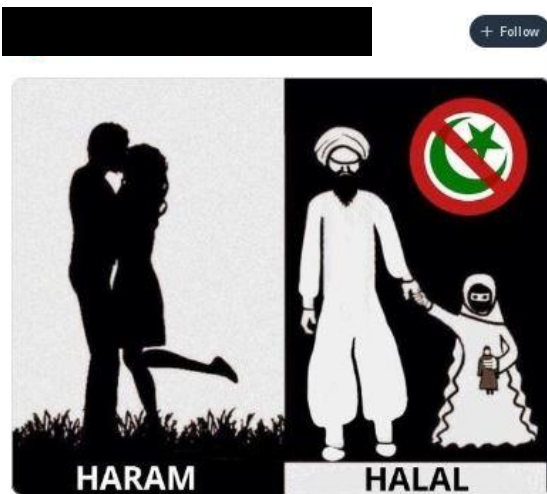
<https://bsky.app/profile/noblesavage.bsky.social/post/3kqmwqsh6yl2f>

Context: This post is not connected to the South Asian context but is self-explanatory, revealing how prevalent Islamophobia is on Bluesky in varying contexts.

**Link:**

<https://bsky.app/profile/n30ie.bsky.social/post/3lbanjymtrm2a>

Context: This post, now deleted, is another example of anti-Islamic content on the platform.

**Link:**

<https://bsky.app/profile/koconstructionchi.bsky.social/post/3kq2c5bfk2f27>

Context: The post suggests that Muslim men are pedophiles. It claims that, for Muslims, two adults in a relationship are considered to be committing a “forbidden” or “haram” act, whereas an old Muslim man marrying a child is permissible or “halal.”

**Link:**

<https://bsky.app/profile/awbijective.bsky.social/post/3ke277m6bka2f>

Context: This post uses MC and BC (short forms for MotherF@\$er and SisterF#\$%^r in Hindi) and targets famous Muslim personalities in India, abusing them based on their religious identity.

Sexually Explicit Islamophobic Content Mocking Muslim Women

Another disturbing trend on Bluesky is the posting of sexually explicit content targeting Muslim women. Below are some examples:



Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/harish4099.bsky.social/post/3lbzj3u7z3c24>

Context: The post shows a pig, with a skull cap worn by Muslims, and the word “Allah” written on its forehead in Arabic. The woman is screaming, while in an uncomfortable sex position, “Pig Allah leave me.”



Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/harish4099.bsky.social/post/3lbrxr6wmcc22>

Context: The post shows a pregnant Muslim woman in a Hijab. The accompanying text in Hindi reads, “My father has sex with me, my brother has sex with me, my uncle inserts inside me, Islam is beautiful.”

**Link:**

<https://bsky.app/profile/krishankumarsingh.bsky.social/post/3lqcqps5s4c26>

Context: The post in Hindi refers to Muslims and claims that fathers have intercourse with their daughters forcefully, sons with their maternal aunts, yet they dare to call Hindus blind followers.

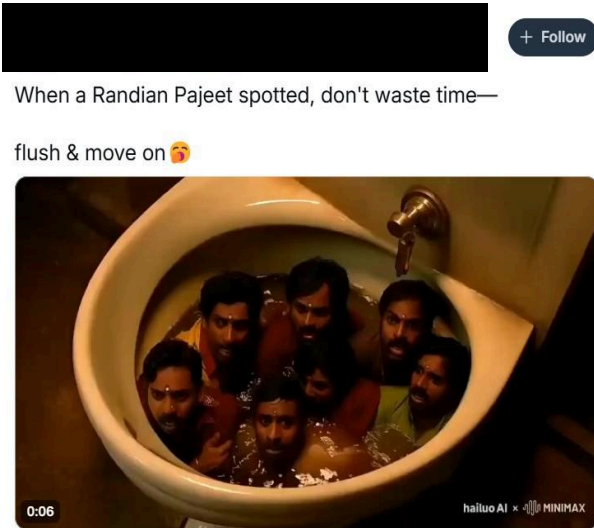
**Link:**

<https://bsky.app/profile/harish4099.bsky.social/post/3lc5mgjeuy226>

Context: The car covered in black symbolizes a Muslim woman in a Burqa (A type of Islamic veil). The men around her in Muslim skull caps are shown speaking to each other about the car/woman. One says, "Stay far away this is my car," to which the other men reply, "So what if we also ride this car, we have also allowed you to ride our car."

Racism and Casteism

Below are examples of racist and casteist posts found throughout the platform.



Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/hissfishh.bsky.social>

Context: The term "pajeet" is a racial slur used against people of South Asian descent, particularly Indians. The picture here is self-explanatory, showing South Asian-looking people in a toilet bowl. The accompanying text reads, "Flush and move on."



Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/nirobtweet.bsky.social/post/3leevb7q3ql23>

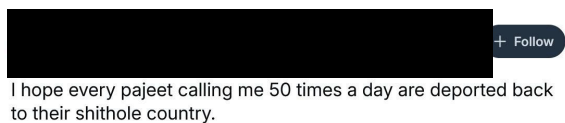
Context: This meme portrays a Hindu nationalist figure urging boycotts of Muslims online with the racial slur "Pajeet." This example documents how hate speech memes can merge conflicting but equally discriminatory points of view.



Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/mrsaha777.bsky.social/post/3letamm3k322x>

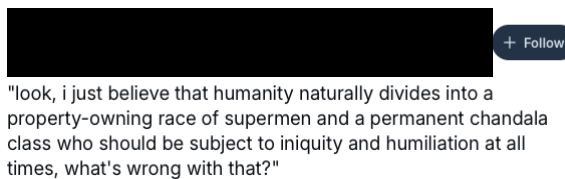
Context: “Kanglu” is a racial slur used against Bangladeshi people.



Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/skittlesinmyhoodie.bsky.social/post/3lgwgh3z4pc2g>

Context: The post both uses this hateful slur while also urging deportation and referring to South Asian homelands as a “shithole.”



Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/shituationist.bsky.social/post/3k62tspgxle2b>

Context: Terms such as “Chandala” as used in this post are casteist in nature and used to dehumanize caste-oppressed minorities.

Additionally, some bigoted users are creating harassing lists to block Dalits. We would encourage moderation to make clear that casteist hate speech and behavior are not allowed on the platforms.

[+ Follow](#)

Added someone to the fuck fascism and bootlicker lists for running a "dalit" blocklist. I have no respect for anybody who supports a social caste system, let alone people who would support any of the treatment I'm reading on "dalits."

Link:

<https://bsky.app/profile/lectronyx.page/post/3lfvqwffs7k2e>

Context: This post is intended to inform users about the existence of a blocklist targeting Dalit individuals. The need for users to create counter-blocklists in response to discriminatory ones underscores a significant failure in platform moderation and highlights the urgent need for institutional oversight and intervention by Bluesky.

Conclusion

Bluesky has created a positive space for many South Asian caste, racial, and religious minorities to explore new ways of community building amid widespread disinformation and online harassment. We hope the findings of this report will foster greater collaboration between Bluesky, civil society, and internet researchers to better localize the platform and ensure that safety and moderation are accessible to even the most marginalized users.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the many readers and researchers who contributed to this report, and we extend special thanks to our reviewers: Rachel Kuo, Research Facilitator, Asian American Disinfo Table, and others. We are also grateful to our collaborators at the Global Alliance Against Digital Hate and Extremism.

Appendix

[The UN Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech](#) defines hate speech as “**any kind of communication in speech**, writing or behaviour, that **attacks** or uses **pejorative** or **discriminatory** language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of **who they are**, in other words, based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor.”

For the purpose of this report, we define Islamophobic, casteist, and racist hate speech as follows:

Islamophobic Hate Speech

Islamophobic hate speech includes language or content that expresses hatred, hostility, or discrimination toward Muslims or Islam. This may involve:

- Dehumanizing portrayals of Muslims
- False claims that vilify or criminalize Muslim communities
- Stereotypes that associate Islam with violence, terrorism, or backwardness
- Calls for exclusion, surveillance, or harm based on religious identity

Individuals or groups are targeted based on their real or perceived adherence to Islam. Islamophobic hate speech contributes to a broader environment of religious discrimination and polarization. In this report, we examine global islamophobia and its particular expression in South Asian contexts, as amplified by local religious ethnonationalist movements.

Casteist Hate Speech

Casteist hate speech refers to expressions that reinforce caste-based hierarchies or incite hostility, exclusion, or violence toward individuals based on their caste identity. This includes:

- Derogatory slurs or demeaning references to Dalits (Scheduled Castes), Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes), or other marginalized castes
- Glorification of caste supremacy or caste-based violence
- Justification of caste-based discrimination or segregation
- Denial of caste discrimination as a real issue when used to delegitimize victims' experiences

Such speech upholds oppressive social structures and causes tangible harm to those in caste-oppressed communities, both in South Asia and regions with large populations of South Asians.

Racist Hate Speech

Racist hate speech comprises expressions that demean, dehumanize, or incite hostility against individuals or groups based on race, ethnicity, or perceived racial characteristics. It includes:

- Use of racial slurs, stereotypes, or caricatures
- Content that promotes racial superiority or inferiority
 - Calls for violence, exclusion, or segregation based on racial identity
- Conspiracy theories that target racial or ethnic groups

This form of hate speech contributes to systemic racism, social polarization, and physical and psychological harm to targeted communities.