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## THE LATENT FORM OF DEFAMATION IN COVERING THE RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN ONLINE MEDIA

The purpose of this article is to identify the submission of false information in the area of religion in the media. The author finds the reason for this problem in the professional incompetence of journalists. This is due to the fact that media workers do not check information, do not research it and distribute it without thinking about the consequences. And the audience takes the data completely trusting the media. In addition to the fact, that this is a violation of responsibility before the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "About Mass Media", the author in this material shows a direct connection between the consequences and distorted facts of religion in the media.

**Key words:** terrorism, media image, religion, islam, mass media, defamation.

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### Жаңа бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарында діни экстремизм тақырыбын жабудағы жалған дұшпандық нысаны

Осы мақаланың мақсаты бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарында дін туралы жалған ақпарат беруді анықтау болып табылады. Автор осы проблеманың себебін журналистердің кәсіби біліктілігінен табады. Бұған медиа қызметкерлері ақпарат тексермейді, оны зерттемейді және оның салдарын ойламастан таратады. Ал аудитория бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарына толығымен сенетін деректерді алады. Бұл «Бұқаралық ақпарат құралдары туралы» Қазақстан Республикасының Заңына сәйкес жауапкершіліктің бұзылуы болып табылатындығына қарамастан, осы материалдың авторы бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарындағы дін туралы салдардың және бұрмаланған фактілердің тікелей байланысын көрсетеді.

**Түйін сөздер:** медиа бейне, лаңкестік, дін, ислам, БАҚ, диффамация.

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### Скрытая форма диффамации при освещении темы религиозного экстремизма в новых медиа

Цель статьи заключается в выявлении случаев подачи недостоверной информации на тему религии в СМК. Причина – профессиональная некомпетентность журналистов. Это обусловлено тем, что работники СМК не проверяют информацию, не изучают ее и распространяют, не задумываясь о последствиях. А аудитория принимает данные, полностью доверяясь средствам массовой информации. Помимо того, что это нарушение ответственности перед Законом РК «О СМК», авторы в данном материале показывают прямую связь между последствиями и искаженными фактами о религии в СМК.

**Ключевые слова:** терроризм, медиаобраз, религия, ислам, СМК, диффамация.

## Introduction

Against the background of recent events in the global community, covering themes of terrorism and extremism in the mass media moves forward one step with the global political and economic problems. Primarily, this is due to destabilization of the political situation in the world: the increase in the number of terrorist groups that preach radical currents of different faiths, the growth in the number of terrorist acts. Clearly, the mass media needs to inform the public, observing the requirements specified in the Law on the Media and professional journalists Code of ethics. And there are problems of reliability of facts, objective assessment of the situation, the right of presentation of information.

The research object is the integration of new media with religion. Free access to the Internet information reduces the quality of the content, but not always, reduces the number of users who trust the online media.

“The problem of the truthfulness and reliability of the information – is important for journalism as a whole – is also one of the most significant in the relationship of religion and the mass media”, - said M. Khroul (Khroul 2014: 64).

The first problem is the shortage of objective information. Representatives of the mass media are often subjective in the process of informing. Professional Code of ethics of journalists states that the communications specialist must be impartial in the coverage and evaluation of events. This view is supported by many professionals. In particular, a journalist for The New York Times Rukmini Callimachi engaged in the study of terrorism in Mali in 2013, believes that “...our job as journalists is to understand and to bring gray where there is only black and white. Because there’s always gray.” (<https://www.wired.com>).

The second problem is misinformation due to the insufficient study of the facts or ignorant handling of information. Today, when the mass media became a tool of propaganda, political structures, they often have an impact on the media, which leads to distortion of information for personal purposes, and thus to misinformation of the audience. In this process can be involved, both a major federal and smaller independent media. This is due to the fact that the latter may use the information of the first one.

K. Lundby, believing that “the distortions and disfunction equally likely in the case of closed communication, and in the case when it involves major mass media” (Lundby 2006: 58).

The aim of the research is finding out the problem of verified information on the topic of extremism in

the mass media, the influence of authorities and the unfair execution of the duties of journalists of the electronic media.

To answer these questions the author conducted a content analysis of scientific works of foreign, domestic and Russian researchers in the field of relationship of the media and religion, as well as analysis of documentation and statistical data processing.

### **Unbiased information on religious topics in the mass media: the terrorist aspect.**

The theme of religious terrorism and extremism in the mass media is one of the most important. Half of the airtime of the major broadcasting corporations, the BBC and CNN dedicated to information on the fight against international terrorism (Tarakanov 2008:5). According to the BBC, the number of people affected as a result of acts of terrorism in 2013 increased by 61% in comparison with 2012 ([www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)). However, if we compare 2015 with the number of victims of terrorist acts in 1988, the figure is 3 times less ([www.mir24.tv](http://www.mir24.tv)). So why the fear of the society against terrorism and extremism is growing significantly?

For Archetti, the fact of the mutual influence of terrorism and communication is recognized, but the role of media in this process is not enough researched as the problem ([www.socreklama.ru](http://www.socreklama.ru)).

Shyam Tekwani, describing the situation of the relationship of religion and the mass media in Asia stresses that the quality of information on the topic of terrorism in the media depends on several factors: the level of censorship in each country, the physical infrastructure of the editorial board, the cultural factor of individual ethical principles and public role of the mass media (Tekwani 2008: 2)

In this article we will discuss the relationship of the media and extremism in the context of recent terrorist acts. According to published Global terrorism index, most of the deaths in the terrorist attacks are responsible of the radical Islamist groups as ISIS, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Boko Haram ([www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)).

An expert in the field of sociological research, Camille Bibersov writes that “references to Islam in the context of concepts such as terrorism and extremism, is a disguised form of defamation, which aim is the formation of the society islamophobic stereotypes” ([www.islamnews.ru](http://www.islamnews.ru)).

Defamation is, from a legal point of view, the dissemination of information defaming anyone. And the literature meaning of the term is misinformation. (Great dictionary of the Russian language. - 1-ed-e: SPb.: Norint S. A. Kuznetsov. 1998)

The image of Islam and its representatives in the media makes society to react negatively to them. Generally most of the materials published in the media are of a criminal nature: crimes, murders, terrorist attacks.

The task of the mass media in this situation is to present the audience information objectively, without any kind of expression and self-evaluation. Media should explain to their recipients that the unlawful act is committed by persons who are not adherents of traditional, but radical movements.

Erin Kerns, dedicated to research of the phenomenon of terrorism, says that "...the label of "terrorism" is applied only in cases, when the perpetrator is a Muslim" (Kerns 2017:5).

Muneeba Saleem, a social psychologist from the University of Michigan conducted a study among their students. The students were divided into three groups. Each group was shown different videos with the participation of adherents of Islam. The first group watched a video with a positive content: muslim volunteers working for the benefit of society. The second group was shown videos of neutral content. And for the third was shown a content of a negative character, where the Muslims were presented as terrorists. After that, each of the groups was interviewed. The result was predictable. Impressions about Muslims among the students was identical to the content of the videos they watched. The latter group praised Muslims as aggressive representatives of Islam ([www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)).

Muslim public figure, translator, Porokhova, V. M. critically evaluates unreasonable defamation against the adherents of Islam, that is breaking the human rights. She writes: "the Prophet Muhammad said: "a Muslim, taking the life of one innocent person immediately ceases to be a Muslim and will never feel even the smell of Paradise". Here update: the murderer ceases to be not only a Muslim but a Jew, a Christian. The culprit must be brought to justice. Media world call terrorists "Muslim, or Shaheed" here they distort the meaning of these two words, sacred for Muslims..." ([www.mazhab.kz](http://www.mazhab.kz))

According to the research of the media image of ISIS of international discussion club "Valdai" is evident that the presentation of an Islamic state in the world of the mass media, as an association of religious fanatics, is found in every tenth publication. Every fourth article focuses on the terrorist activity of the organization. And in each of the fifth material actions of ISIS seem like the military. In the overwhelming number of articles of this nature are printed in The Wall Street Journal (38%) and The Gulf (35%). One of the main conclusions of

the research of the club "Valdai" –the massmedia deliberately create the image of Islamic state in the media as an enemy that must be destroyed. This confirms the complete absence of positive materials of this topic ([www.hse.ru](http://www.hse.ru)).

#### **Misrepresentation of the facts in publications of the topic of religion in the mass media**

Misrepresentation or dissemination of false information is another equally important problem. Religious theme in this case will be considered in the context of terrorist activities.

First let us define the concept of "misrepresentation" in the context of the topic. According to the Law on the Media of the Republic of Kazakhstan from 23.07.1999 article 21, paragraph 2 and the Law on the Media of Russian Federation from 27.12.1991, article 49, paragraph 2 one of the duties of the journalist is not the dissemination of unreliable information and checking on the credibility of information. That is, in this case, the misrepresentation is the spread of false information.

After the beginning of active use of electronic media, they have to achieve their aim - to supply to audience prompt information with different content. As a rule, when journalists want to make news as quick as possible, they forget about their responsibilities and mislead society. This situation can lead to bad consequences.

To research this question from the point of view of the materials in the mass media on a religious theme, it is possible to identify a number of problematic points. One of the main is the presumption of innocence. At the regional and international level, the presumption of innocence guaranteed by article 14, paragraph 2, of The international Covenant on civil and political rights. In this agreement it is stated that this principle is "everyone charged with a criminal offence shall have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law." ([www.ec.europa.eu](http://www.ec.europa.eu)).

That is, without investigation of the case and the verdict suspect nobody has the right to accuse the person of committing a crime.

Despite the commitments referred to in article 14, paragraph 2 of the International Covenant on civil and political rights, the violation of the presumption of innocence remains a frequent phenomenon in the practice of the mass media. A striking example is the coverage of the terrorist attack that occurred on the April 3, 2017 in St. Petersburg. After the incident, the media began to inform the public quickly about the investigation, causes and consequences of a terrorist attack. Russian Online-resource Fontankarevealed in one of his first materials that the alleged bomber

is a citizen of Kazakhstan Maxim Aryshev (www.inform.kz). The wording “alleged suicide bomber – Aryshev” was picked up by information wave and widespread. However, the investigation had not yet been held and the details of the case only began to be studied.

In turn, the “Interfax” has published the following information: “According to one version, the explosive device in the metro of St. Petersburg was detonated by the suicide bomber. According to preliminary data, it 23-years old citizen of Central Asia” (www.interfax.ru).

The difference of the facts in two informational texts is evident.

The disinformation in this situation led to the fact that an overwhelming number of Russian mass media began to refer to Fontanka, one of the first resources, that published material. Later, after investigation, and the identity of the suicide bomber whom was a native of Kyrgyzstan, 22-year-old Akbarjon Jalilov, it seemed the situation was explained. The media began to publish updated information refuting the primary.

Another situation that occurred after the terrorist act in the subway of St. Petersburg is the proliferation of media photos of Andrey Nikitin (Ilyas). Andrey Nikitin, the native of Bashkiria, was in the time of the attack in a nearby subway and after he left it, he became the first suspect. This is because he is a Muslim, and his clothing and appearance was emphasized this fact. His name was not published by the media in their first materials, but they publicized photo of Andrey, captured on video camera surveillance in St. Petersburg metropolitan. And a lot of mass media began to publish information without investigation and verification of this version. Later, Andrey said: “This story complicated my life. Yesterday I couldn’t fly home — the other passengers refused to fly with me on the same flight. Besides, I lost my job: today my employer in Nizhnevartovsk informed about my dismissal, referring to the request of the regional Investigative Committee”. Later, the media has denied this information without an apology to the victim of this situation, Andrey Nikitin (www.life.ru).

For example, one terrorist act with two situations where two people have called the supposed “criminals” even before the verdict, you can see the lack of competence of journalists, dereliction of duty and negligent attitude to work.

### Conclusion

Today the situation with foreign and domestic mass media in the coverage of terrorist acts is problematic in several aspects.

The problem of flow of unbiased information in an electronic media is:

- Frequent use of the term “Islam” in the publications of terrorist activities, thus creating a negative media image and leads the audience astray;
- Improper verification of facts published in the materials.

The foregoing situation proves the fact that journalism does not always follow the canons of the law and code of ethics. Statistical data, expert opinions and the public reaction clearly characterize the current state of the society in the covering of the topic of extremism. It was revealed that there is a necessity for clear distinction for the target audience between the concepts of “Islam,” “radicalism”, “terrorism”, “extremism”.

As a way to solve this problem the author proposes:

1. The implementation of the Internet project as the articles with diverse content in a research of multiple information resources. The name of the project: “Terrorism and Islam are two different religions”. The aim: to differentiate “islam” and “terrorism” concepts.
2. Creating guidelines and training materials for journalists, students of journalism faculty with consideration of the problems of writing text in this aspect.
3. State grants to implement several projects aimed at educating the public on issues of religion.

These measures after their implementation in the future should show a high efficiency in inter-faith, international dialogue, and promote clearer communication between the public and the press, and to stabilize the international situation.

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