

# FreeEx Digest

- no. 10

## **SOROS AD PORTAS! AGAIN**

**Analysis of the anti-Soros/anti-NGO/anti-media discourse**

*This thematic dossier is produced with the support of IFEX through an IFEX Civic Space Grant.*

*The opinions and information presented herein do not necessarily represent the official position of IFEX.*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONTEXT	1
WHY THIS CASE STUDY?	2
THE PURPOSE OF THE CASE STUDY	3
SOROSISM - A DEFINITION ATTEMPT	3
METHODOLOGY	4
MAIN FINDINGS OF THE CASE STUDY	6
WHO AND HOW ARE THE SOROSISTS?	6
WHAT ARE SOROSISTS DOING?	11
WHAT TO DO AGAINST THE SOROSISTS?	13
THE PUBLIC'S REACTIONS	15
RECOMMENDATIONS	16

# Context

Romania went through four electoral campaigns in 2024: overlapping campaigns for local and European Parliament elections in June, followed by overlapping campaigns for the presidential and parliamentary elections in late November and early December.

The campaigns were marked by a relative electoral lull, punctuated by the usual, sterile political disputes. The electoral atmosphere was almost non-existent or hardly perceptible to the electorate, and its media representation was almost no different from the usual or pre-election one. We had the same banal debates around politicians' statements or constantly reinventing political scenarios, and we were confronted with yet another election campaign in which, with minor exceptions, there was a lack of discussion around electoral offers, public policy proposals, concrete solutions offered by political actors to society's problems.

The vacuum left by this mode of election campaigning was discreetly but effectively filled by political communication on video sharing platforms and social media. In some cases, election debates organized by some influencers have been remarkably successful, professionally organized, following the rules of traditional media or coming close to them. Such online debates have had significant audiences, sometimes surpassing those of TV debates.

The surprising result of the first round of the presidential elections, followed by their annulment have dynamited the political scene and the political debate. The legitimate dissatisfaction and revolt in society naturally found an echo and was considerably amplified in the media and political arena. The necessary debate on these issues of major public interest has become a new opportunity for polarization and has been monopolized by voices less interested in a real exchange of pragmatic ideas. The camps split quite quickly, the discourse radicalized and socio-political polarization deepened.

The Romanian Constitutional Court decision to annul the presidential elections was widely analyzed and criticized both in the traditional press and on social media. Unfortunately, however, the authorities' anemic and unconvincing communication has contributed to the buildout of conspiratorial scenarios in which the domestic political mainstream or forces

foreign to the domestic democratic process (intelligence services, Soros, the EU, the Biden administration) become culprits for the annulment of the elections.

Thus, the absolutely legitimate, necessary and healthy for democracy debate on the Romanian Constitutional Court decision has turned into a new occasion for political-media brawl, in which legal arguments have been overwhelmed by conspiratorial discourse. It didn't take long before it was shouted: "Soros!"

Explicitly anti-Soros rhetoric and references exploded after 5 February 2025, around the time the Trump administration decided to shut down USAID. That decision was accompanied by a statement by Richard Grenell, Donald Trump's special envoy, who claimed that USAID-funded programmes had favoured leftist forces and were being used against conservative political forces, explicitly mentioning Romania. His message was almost instantly picked up by Romanian journalists, influencers and politicians and used as a weapon against real or imaginary opponents in Romania or the EU: journalists, activists, NGOs, politicians. Their discourse was aggressive, accusatory, vindictive, blaming 'Sorosism' or 'Sorosists' for what was presented as shortcomings or threats to society and the Romanian state.

## WHY THIS CASE STUDY?

In our view, the rise of extremist, discriminatory or hate speech in the public and political sphere is a threat to democracy, freedom of expression, pluralism of ideas and the physical safety of individuals. The rekindling of this discourse comes in an extremely tense context, marked by acute social polarisation, political tensions and the rise of populist and far-right political movements, as well as neo-legionary organisations and groups. The war at our border contributes to this tense climate and is a theme exploited massively by the conspiracy rhetoric.

The consequences of the rise of this aggressive rhetoric - which includes the witch-hunt unleashed against the fiction created in the collective imagination about the so-called 'Soros network' and alleged actions associated with it - have already been felt by several individuals and organisations in the months since the elections of 24 November 2024. There are a worrying number of

cases in which civic activists, journalists, editors or non-governmental organisations have been insulted, harassed, assaulted, even to the point of death threats. Some of these possible crimes have already been investigated or sanctioned by the investigating bodies. The authorities are also investigating the existence of far-right paramilitary groups suspected of planning to organise actions against the constitutional order.

We believe that it is necessary to analyse this type of discourse in order to better understand its manifestations, its characteristics and to see if and how the anti-Sorosist rhetoric approaches or can be framed as hate speech.

## **THE PURPOSE OF THE CASE STUDY**

To identify the characteristics and manifestations of the anti-Sorosist/anti-NGO/anti-media discourse promoted in the public space in the aftermath of the first round of the 2024 presidential election and the Trump administration's decision to close the USAID programme.

## **SOROSISM - A DEFINITION ATTEMPT**

Sorosism represents, in the collective imagination of those who use this term, a set of forces, persons, organisations, interests, values that act at local, national, global level to impose the values of progressivism, globalism and the personal interests of the group associated with philanthropist George Soros.

Under the umbrella of Sorosism are brought together members of NGOs, journalists, academics, politicians, intelligence services' people, anyone who has other opinions or is situated in the opposing political camp.

## METHODOLOGY

Through this case study we aim to identify the main labelings and stereotypes associated with NGOs and press/journalists, the actions associated with them and the 'solutions' proposed in relation to them.

### **Who and how are the Sorosists?**

labels, attributes,  
hallmarks

### **What do the Sorosists do?**

actions attributed to  
actors identified as  
Sorosists

### **What do we do against the Sorosists?**

the "solutions" proposed  
by the promoters of the  
anti-Sorosist messages

We have included in the analysis a wide range of editorial products: shows aired by TV stations, video podcasts by journalists or influencers distributed on online platforms, as well as messages and videos posted by journalists or influencers on social networks, articles published on opinion or news websites, and public comments on the posts.

In this material we aim to highlight only the discursive patterns, arguments and elements on the basis of which hostile messages have been constructed against non-governmental organisations and media perceived as affiliated to George Soros and/or USAID.

Although this is not a comprehensive research, we include in our analysis some examples from the discourse against some NGOs/journalists/politicians who, even if they are not assimilated to the 'Sorosist' zone, but, on the contrary, may be ideologically at the opposite pole, become, in their turn, victims of an aggressive rhetoric, whose effect is equally harmful for society.

In this analysis we are not denying the right of any person to criticise the work of organisations, journalists, editors, George Soros or USAID policies, but we are analysing the sideslips that have occurred in such critical discourse. Taken individually, some of the quotes below fall within the bounds of the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, but their good faith is undermined by the fact that they have been consistently accompanied by derogatory labels or false or factually unsubstantiated claims dominated by incitement, which sabotage the potential validity of the criticism contained in them and turn them into elements of a hostile discourse.

A list of the sources and promoters of these messages is available in a [database](#) published on the ActiveWatch website, but it is not exhaustive and is not intended to generate rankings or value judgements about their activity and/or public profile.

*The extended analysis and the list of relevant discourse excerpts can be found in the annexes of the research, in the [Romanian language version](#).*

*Attention! Some of the messages included in the analysis contain offensive elements.*

# **Main findings of the case study**

Anti-Sorosism discourse, built on prejudices and stereotypes, has, by its sheer scale, turned into a veritable campaign of denunciation, antagonisation and stigmatisation, often accompanied by intimidation, threats and incitement to hatred or violence. It is promoted by a vast (not necessarily coordinated) network of publications and online programmes, TV stations, influencers, politicians and journalists.

The Sorosist image is shaped by an abundance of insults, accusations seldom backed by evidence, processes of intent and conspiracy theories, resulting in the image of an all-powerful 'enemy' besieging the city, threatening Romanian social order and values. The Sorosist enemy has an identity that is sometimes diffuse, sometimes extremely concrete, with a name and surname. The consequences of this type of discourse have been and are immediate and easily visible: from intimidation, insults, threats, in the online space or on the audiovisual media, to physical attacks against journalists.

The spread of this discourse in the mainstream media, on social networks and in the political sphere has the effect of normalising it in society and contributes to the rise of hate speech, social polarisation and the narrowing of the space for balanced dialogue in society.

The explosion of this discourse also contributes to radicalisation in society, to the political rise of extremist forces, undermining trust in institutions and the democratic process.

## **WHO AND HOW ARE THE SOROSISTS?**

The qualifiers associated with the term Sorosism range from simple insults to demonization, references to diseases and the use of terms which the Nazi propaganda instrumentalized against Jews.



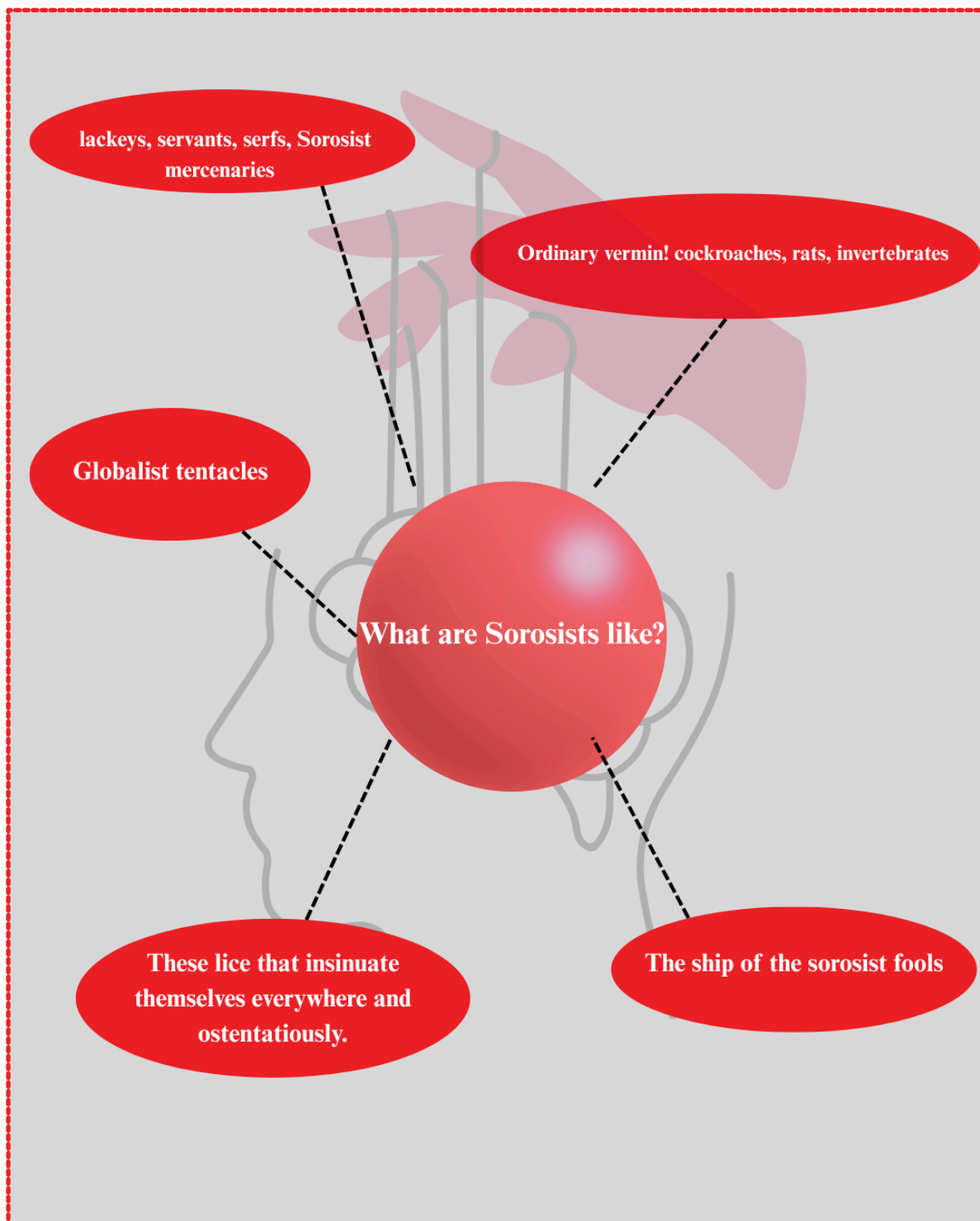


They are 'satanist bitches' who have sold out and are acting on orders from a globalist 'infernal network' that aims to promote progressive neo-Marxist propaganda, LGBTQ rights, etc.

- Yes, it seems that Soros is Satan, literally. Now Soros has been defeated, and his hordes are howling as if trapped by the snakes' mouths, for they are about to pay. Hundreds and hundreds of Satan/Soros followers in Romania seem to have gone rabid.

They are associated with power, a global conspiracy that secretly rules the world, projecting the image of Sorosists as a clandestine group with illegitimate powers.

- *They represent a clan, a network that has seized Europe, and in the past also the United States. And which was moving towards that (progressive) model.*
- *extremely dangerous tentacular network*
- *Hordes! These NGO's were never elected by anyone. They gather as a horde, like hordes.*



**They are often labelled 'traitors' for the reasons listed above.**

- *Environmental NGOs are traitors and working DIRECTLY for Russia*
- *Soros Open Network - the spider's web of foreign espionage in Romania*
- *Soros network, but we can call it anti-Romanian network*

**They are associated with insects, mammals or various diseases, terms and associations that reproduce the propaganda used by the Nazi regime against the Jews.**

- *Man, you know what they're like now? They're like cockroaches seeing something. Suddenly the light's on. Now they're disappearing like cockroaches, but they've still got stockpiles in Brussels.*
- *Boy, boy, I don't understand why this aquarium, this nest, this rat net, can't be broken, so that some rats fall out, who keeps these rats, mice alive, they're kept alive and they won't leave.*
- *These lice that are intruding everywhere and ostentatiously*
- *[Trump] is eliminating the entire chameleonic, cancerous system that has infested the so-called 'free' world. In other words, all of the cancerous state and non-state factors that have undermined the democracies of the free world are now being eliminated.*

**They are profiteers who benefit from various privileges and would not have any career prospects without the Soros, EU, USAID funding.**

- *They're just filthy parasites! They just sat around, they shuffled money, grants, you know?*

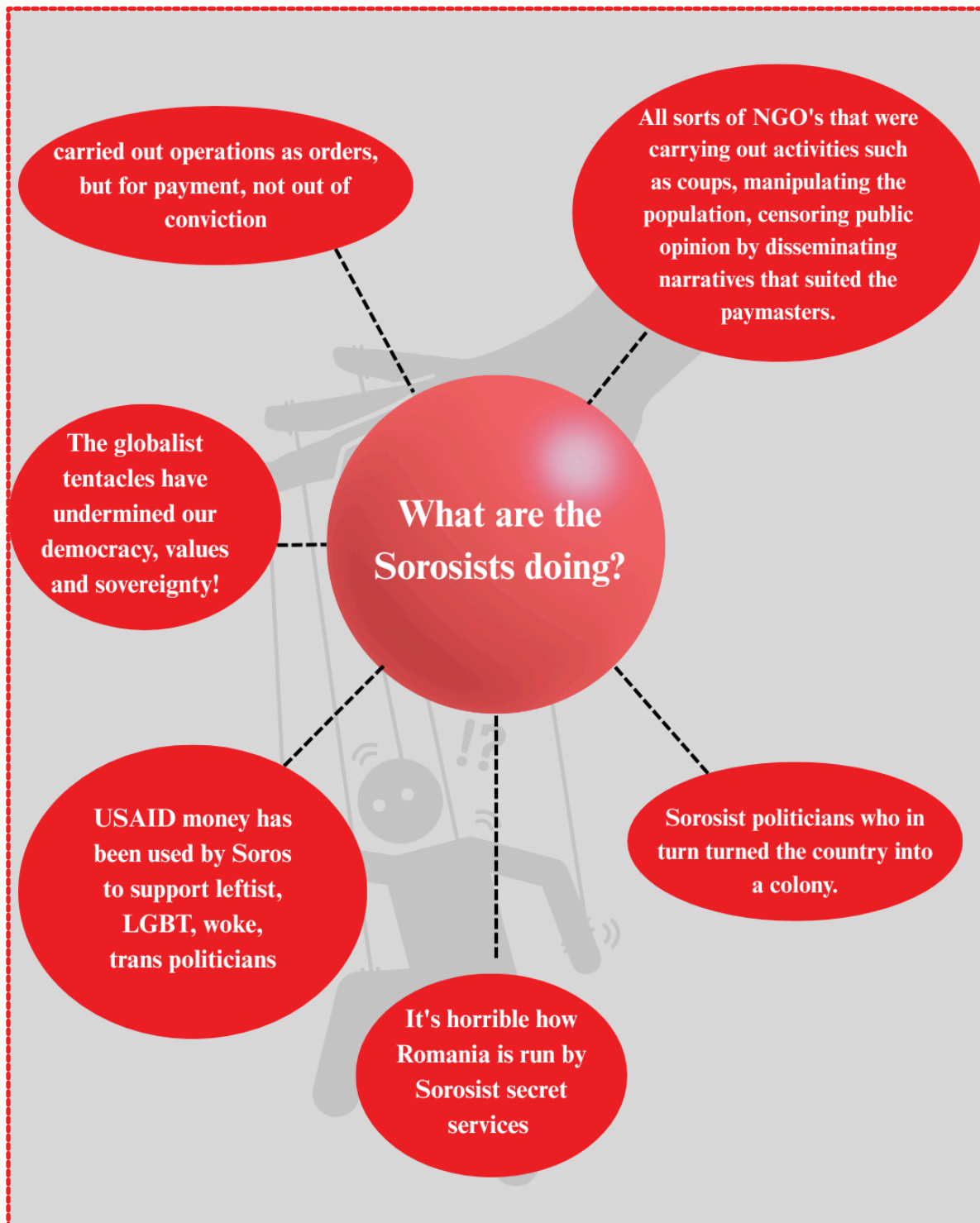
**Soros is a CIA agent, and NGOs are CIA fronts.**

- *network of so-called Soros agents - covert agents*
- *deep state and sorosism are always associated*
- *globalists of the USAID/Soros/CIA empire*

**They are the target of other insults and slander.**

- *sorosist slut!*
- *sorosist bastards*

- *mafia type organisation*
- *sorosist ship of fools*
- *political and media terrorists*
- *these bastard NGOs*



## WHAT ARE SOROSISTS DOING?

**The Sorosists control power or conspire to seize power, determine who governs, and command public institutions.**

- *It's horrible how Romania is run by Sorosist ex-Securitate secret agents, who command Sorosist politicians who in turn have turned the country into a colony.*
- *Let's expose the Sorosists who have infiltrated to the highest level and have had their claws on Romania's politics and finances over the past decades.*
- *Half a BILLION dollars from USAID to a network of NGOs that interfered in Romania's 2024 elections. The Sorosist network is targeting children, activists, journalists, teachers, conservative politicians in Romania, Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, Georgia.*

**The Sorosists propagandise, manipulate, censor, do fact-checking, run a 'huge propaganda apparatus' with which they want to impose their ideology and control people's minds or support the interests of the US/EU or other states.**

- *the huge propaganda apparatus (much of it financed, directly or indirectly, by the SOROS NETWORK) forcefully drugs the population with the idea 'it was the Russians who did it'!*
- *'Independent journalists' paid in droves to implement censorship and blacklists - mega network!*
- *a lot of the Biden administration money flowed through Soros to the so called independent press, but it was independent with inverted commas because it was running these climate narratives, all this crazy stuff that was crazy before, writing about pandemics and putting up a wall against anyone who questioned the official narratives*
- *all these organisations have in common is that they receive money from foreign governments and so their editorial policy is influenced by the politics of a state*

**They promote globalism and progressivism or other eccentric ideologies that do not meet society's expectations or needs. They promote minority rights, undermining social order, values and national identity.**

- *With or without pay, these people have attacked the integrity and mental health of everyone, promoting, for big money or out of sheer stupidity, vaccination with an experimental serum, the 'creeds' and representatives of the LGBTQ as the new aristocracy, 'helping poor Ukrainians' and, last but not least, they have obstinately sought to discredit the Romanian Orthodox Church and Christian morality.*
- *When they got the money to attack Orthodoxy, the icons, education and everything, that's what those bastards did, you know (...) they struck at the very root of the nation, of the people, of education, of the traditions of the Church, of everything that meant Romania itself (...) they came up with these woke projects that they came and attacked through Facebook, through social networks by publishing so-called surveys, not to mention those NGOs*
- *the anti-Christian octopus has spread its tentacles everywhere and poisoned the minds of hundreds of thousands of Romanians*
- *Those who were cursing us and saying that we would be paid, they were the ones paid to make anti-Romanian propaganda. With green, yes. They were paid to sabotage Romania's interests. Political and media terrorists.*

**The Sorosists started the war in Ukraine, the "orange revolutions" in Eastern Europe, they canceled the presidential elections in Romania, they support vaccines, etc.**

- *Every day, new and scandalous information are revealed about the Soros foundations' operations around the world for the benefit of neo-Marxist progressists, but also with the aim of decapitating the leadership of vulnerable states at the end of "orange revolutions" or operations of this kind, in order to install at the helm of states influential people of Soros foundations, loyal to progressists around the world and primarily to the Democratic Party in the United States.*

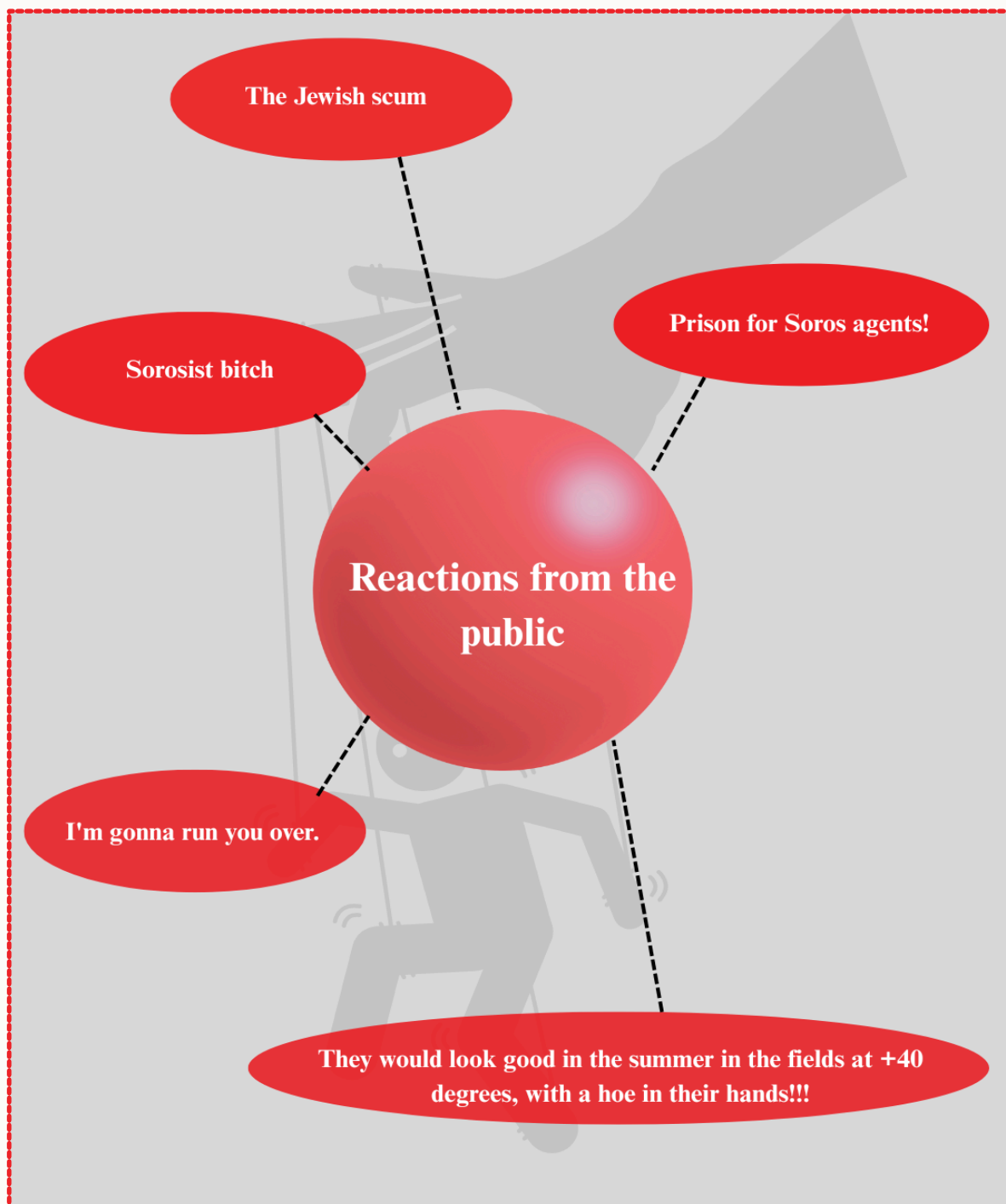
# WHAT TO DO AGAINST THE SOROSISTS?

The "solutions" proposed by the promoters of this speech against the Sorosists start from confession, exorcism and go up to their ban, imprisonment, sending them to labor camps, expulsion or their disappearance (it is not clear whether it is the disappearance of organizations or individuals).

- *With the installation of Trump, the Exorcism has begun, the exorcism of Soros. The exorcism of Soros's Demons that I was talking about yesterday, revealed all the disciples of Satan/Soros!*
- *Exorcising Soros*



- No one escapes, until the last one. I guarantee you that very soon their last worry will be the elections, maybe they directly validate Georgescu, or organize the second round yesterday, because I honestly don't know who will organize the elections. It will not be an "earthquake" in Romania, but a major "cataclysm". Everyone will pay. That's it. The time has come. It has begun!
- You don't have much time left. The time is coming to put your hand and write in detail the "declaration that I give, acknowledge and sign"...
- The Republican Party in Romania supports the banning of the Soros network in our country!





## THE PUBLIC'S REACTIONS

As we wanted to see what the effect of this type of speech was, we looked at the reactions (comments/messages) of the audience that watched the editorial products included in this analysis.

We found that insults predominate in the comments, sometimes aggressive ("Sorosist bitch"), but it can even reach to death threats ("I will run over you with a car").

Such messages create an atmosphere that can lead audiences to resort to physical aggression. Unfortunately, this is what happened during this period, as evidenced by the avalanche of attacks on journalists during the street protests organized in January, February and March 2012<sup>5</sup> by far-right movements and parties.

- *Sorosist bitch, Jewish scum, etc.*
- *I will run you over with the car.*
- *The globalist rats are desperate!*
- *Everyone out in the street until the Sorosist rats leave and not only that!*
- *Prison for the Soros agents!*
- *How good it would be for them in the summer, in the fields, at +40 degrees, with a hoe in hand!!*
- *Fuck Macron, you liar, you Sorosist, you ordinary trash who supported Lasconi, you bastard, you will leave, your people don't want you anymore, go away and take your "wife" man and leave with all the Sorosists, globalists, lgbtq in Ukraine to fight the bastards."*

# Recommendations

We believe that a debate is necessary regarding the dangers of hate speech and the legal, institutional, social, educational mechanisms to combat it. If its definition and regulation are relatively known and accepted, we believe that it is useful to analyze its concrete manifestations, the particularities of language, the groups, organizations and individuals that are its target. We also believe that an analysis and monitoring of the reactions of the competent authorities, including from the justice sector, regarding the way in which the specific laws that sanction hate speech are applied is required.

A more efficient promotion of the legislative framework regarding freedom of expression is necessary, as well as a better understanding and application of specific laws and regulations, in order to prevent and mitigate the effects of excessive language that risks inhibiting and endangering democratic debate, increasing polarization, fueling distrust and hatred in society.

*The extended analysis and the list of relevant discourse excerpts can be found in the annexes of the research, in its [Romanian language version](#).*

