

My name is Yasser Louati and on behalf of the Collective Against Islamophobia in France, I'd like to first thank OSCE's ODIHR for making it possible for our governments to hear what is being ignored back home.

As a human rights organization, we do not believe that one form of injustice is worse than another.

In our European context, we are witnessing the rise and even relentless attempts to normalize some irresponsible rhetoric, calling one form of racism as worse than another.

Recent developments in Hungary call for urgent action from ODIHR to effectively act for the protection of refugee lives on our continent. We cannot tolerate it and no political argument can possibly explain the shooting of refugees fleeing bombs back home. Their dehumanization to allow their confinement in camps or using military force against should remind us of what happened during the war in Yugoslavia that culminated with a genocide in Srebrenica.

This new form of state sponsored Islamophobia cannot be ignored but should it be still burdensome or perceived as politically risky for official delegations to use the word, I will do it for them. Islamophobia, or the attacks against people and institutions because of their real or assumed adherence to the Muslim faith, is a fact of daily life for millions of people in OSCE member states.

The recent rise in hate crimes against visible religious minorities is troubling and we call upon ODIHR to act for effective strategies including grassroots organisations for whom the peaceful coexistence of their respective communities is more important than ideology and the implementation of foreign policy agendas.

It is deeply disturbing that a OSCE session on combating hate crime and discriminations is being used as a platform to confront the European Jewish and Muslim communities which are both facing the same challenges fueled by hatred and ignorance.

Despite all factual evidence, sociological research and even going against the very interest of the European Jewish communities, Andrew Baker is again using the platform offered to him by the OSCE to promote irresponsible rhetoric.

Once again, the personal representative on antisemitism, Andrew Baker, has made a declaration specifically targeting Muslims and people living in deprived areas, mainly from Arab and African descent, blaming them for the rise of anti-Semitism, against all factual evidence.

This goes against all previous commitments related to tolerance and non-discrimination. This person has been trusting his position at the OSCE for more than 10 years now, using it as a political platform to lobby for his own intolerant views, which again, says a lot about our notion of diversity and accountability.

A man once said: "In God we trust. All others bring data" and Mr Andrew Baker fails to bring data to support his statements.

So my question is specifically directed at ODIHR, the US delegation and the German delegation:

Do you condone Mr Baker's views and opinions? If yes, then how do you reconcile this with OSCE commitments. And if no, why do you continue hiring him and supporting him?