



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Reports by the OSCE Chairperson's Personal Representatives on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination

As delivered by Deputy Chief of Mission Katherine Brucker
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
December 7, 2023

Rabbi Baker, dear Andy, and Dr. Polak, dear Regina, welcome back to the Permanent Council. It is a pleasure to have you here again. Thank you very much for your detailed reports.

The United States remains steadfast in our commitment to protecting and advancing the dignity and human rights of all people across the OSCE region. Worldwide, we have seen an alarming rise in antisemitism, including Holocaust distortion, throughout the year and, most distressingly, following the October 7 Hamas attacks on Israel. In Europe alone, harassment of and attacks on Jewish people and defacement of Jewish sites has risen exponentially. We should be very clear – it is antisemitic to hold Jews collectively responsible for the policies of any government. Singling out Jews for harassment to promote a particular ideology or position is intolerable.

We are also deeply concerned by the increase in anti-Muslim hatred fueled by the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict. As President Biden said on October 20, “We can’t stand by and stand silent when this happens. We must, without equivocation, denounce antisemitism. We must also, without equivocation, denounce Islamophobia.”

We all have a shared responsibility to combat antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, racism, discrimination, and xenophobia. The United States, for example, saw its highest number of antisemitic incidents ever in 2022, according to a report by the Anti-Defamation League – up more than a third over 2021. With a notable surge in antisemitic incidents since October 7, it is likely we will see those figures surpassed this year. We were also horrified by the shooting of three college students of Palestinian descent in Vermont.

The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to playing a proactive role to change this. In May, the Administration released the first ever U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, the most ambitious and comprehensive U.S. government-led effort to fight antisemitism in American history. The Administration is also launching the first ever U.S. National Security Strategy to Counter Islamophobia in the United States. This strategy will take a whole of society approach to combating anti-Muslim hatred with community leaders, advocates, and members of the public working with the government.

Almost twenty years ago, OSCE participating States endorsed the Berlin Declaration, which “declare(d) unambiguously that international developments or political issues, including

those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify antisemitism.” Rabbi Baker, we look forward to accelerating our work with you and likeminded OSCE participating States to continue sharing best practices in combating antisemitism, providing security for Jewish communities, expanding Holocaust education, and ensuring that people of all faiths can live without fear and intimidation.

Throughout this year in the OSCE region, we continued to see intolerance, including racism, discrimination, and xenophobia in many forms. We also saw hate crimes directed against members of various marginalized racial, religious, ethnic, and Indigenous communities, women, refugees, and members of the LGBTQI+ community.

A hallmark of the Kremlin’s war of aggression against Ukraine has been its attempts to subjugate Ukraine’s people through an odious propaganda campaign denying the existence of a Ukrainian ethnicity, a Ukrainian language, and a Ukrainian national identity. Russia has sought to characterize Ukrainian citizens defending their homeland as neo-Nazis and shamefully manipulate the history of the Holocaust and the Second World War to further its imperialist ambitions. Meanwhile, Russia supports racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist groups in western Europe while failing to acknowledge or address growing antisemitism within its own borders. As Human Rights Watch reports, several antisemitic incidents, some of them violent, rocked the North Caucasus region over the past two months. These include a harrowing October 29 attack on the airport in Dagestan by a mob looking for Jewish passengers and an October 27 arson attack on a Jewish community center under construction in Kabardino-Balkaria.

Russian authorities have continued their crackdown on religious and ethnic groups and civil society organizations that exist outside the strict control of the Kremlin and its narrow definition of what is socially and/or legally acceptable. Authorities have detained, imprisoned, and tortured members, or perceived members, of religious groups designated “extremist,” “terrorist,” or “undesirable,” including Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hizb ut-Tahrir, followers of Turkish Muslim theologian Said Nursi, the Church of Scientology, Falun Gong, and multiple evangelical Protestant groups. On November 7, a court in Chelyabinsk sentenced Yevgeniy Bushev to seven years in prison on charges of “extremism.” His so-called crime was attending Jehovah’s Witnesses meetings and speaking about his religion.

We call on Russia to release all those imprisoned on the basis of their faith, political views, and/or civic activism. Russia’s targeting of members or perceived members of peaceful religious organizations – including in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine – must stop. We cannot ignore the Kremlin’s growing discrimination against, and harassment of, members of various groups, whether on the basis of religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. The November 30 Russian Supreme Court ruling designating what it arbitrarily defines as the so-called “international LGBT movement” as “extremist” effectively greenlights a massive campaign against LGBTQI+ individuals and human rights advocates. The ruling is another alarming dimension of Russia’s intensifying internal crackdown.

Dr. Polak, Rabbi Baker, we must work together to combat all forms of intolerance within the OSCE region, regardless of how it manifests itself. The United States is fully committed to working in partnership with like-minded participating States, civil society organizations, business, faith communities, and the structures within the OSCE, such as ODIHR and the

Parliamentary Assembly, to protect the human rights of all individuals and to stand up against hate in all its forms.

We applaud the North Macedonia Chairpersonship for its strong commitment to countering antisemitism and promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and we look forward to continuing our collaboration with Malta next year.

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