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Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

ODIHR in Ukraine

“The crisis in and around Ukraine has underlined, once again, the value of the OSCE concept of comprehensive security, which includes the human dimension. ODIHR’s substantial contribution to the OSCE’s response to the crisis through continuing dialogue has underscored its relevance and operational capabilities.”

Michael Georg Link, ODIHR Director

ODIHR is the primary human rights institution of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), working to promote democratic elections, democratic governance, respect for human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, the rule of law, and improving the situation of Roma and Sinti.

ODIHR has played an important role in the OSCE reaction to the crisis in and around Ukraine. The ODIHR/OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Human Rights Assessment Mission (HRAM) in 2014 led ODIHR to establish broad consultations with civil society actors, organize workshops for Ukrainian human rights defenders focusing on security and provide training for members of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine in human rights monitoring and security.

In July 2015, ODIHR conducted a follow-up mission to assess changes in the human rights situation in Crimea and its impact on affected groups. Apart from assessing which of the first HRAM’s recommendations had been implemented since the spring of 2014, the follow-up also examined a broad spectrum of human rights that might have been further compromised in Ukraine’s radically changing political landscape.

ODIHR deployed long-term election observation missions to both the 25 May 2014 early presidential election and the 26 October 2014 early parliamentary elections, issuing final reports that noted both elections showed the clear resolve on the part of the authorities to hold genuine elections largely in line with OSCE commitments and other international standards and, in the vast majority of the country, with respect for fundamental freedoms. ODIHR also observed the 25 October 2015 local elections with the final report noting that the elections were competitive, well organized and that the campaign generally showed respect for the democratic process. Nevertheless, the report underscored the need for continued and inclusive reform.

ODIHR, in co-operation with the Ministry of Culture, worked to enhance dialogue between state authorities and Roma civil society about the implementation of national and regional action plans on the protection and integration of Roma. In co-operation with the State Migration Service, the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN refugee agency, an expert debate was created to address particular obstacles Roma face with regard to personal identity documents.

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While co-operating closely with the Special Monitoring Mission, as well as with the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine and other international actors, ODIHR is continuing its work in Ukraine, which can be broken down into five basic programmatic areas.

Human Dimension Dialogue

ODIHR attaches great importance to its role as the main OSCE institutional channel for contact with civil society. Since April 2015, ODIHR's project Strengthening Dialogue among Civil Society and with Key Government Stakeholders on Human Dimension Issues in Ukraine has worked to build capacity, promote dialogue and co-operation between civil society organizations and state representatives to address key human rights issues in Ukraine, in line with OSCE commitments. Hundreds of Ukrainian stakeholders have benefited from training events, workshops, meetings and seminars across the country. These are focused on human rights monitoring, democratic governance and law making, and tolerance and non-discrimination.

Elections

ODIHR stands ready to provide its support to Ukraine to further improve the electoral process and election-related matters, upon request. ODIHR is also ready to deploy an election observation activity to observe local elections in some parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, pending agreement reached among the parties to the Minsk Implementation Package.

Freedom of Religion or Belief

In 2015 and 2016, ODIHR's project to enhance the security of religious or belief communities focused on building the capacity of civil society, religious or belief communities and relevant state institutions on international standards on freedom of religion or belief, identifying and responding to hate crimes and promoting interfaith dialogue, as well as dialogue between the state, civil society organizations and religious or belief communities.

Tolerance and non-discrimination

Building the capacity of civil society to identify, monitor and respond to hate crimes and engage in dialogue with relevant state structures is an integral part of ODIHR's engagement in Ukraine. More information about ODIHR's tools to raise awareness about hate crimes and other forms of intolerance are available at hatecrime.osce.org.

Legislative Support

At Ukraine's request, ODIHR continues to review draft laws on human dimension issues to assess their compliance with international standards and hold workshops on policy-making, legislative planning and evaluation. All ODIHR's legal reviews are available at legislationline.org.

More information

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