



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 2 - Tolerance and non-discrimination II, Review of the implementation of commitments on promotion of mutual respect and understanding: Prevention and responses to hate crimes in the OSCE area; Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions; Combating anti-Semitism; Combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims

As prepared for delivery by Special Envoy Ira Forman
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This year marks the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington, a watershed event in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement that saw courageous citizens such as the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King make extraordinary sacrifices in pursuit of the democratic ideals of our nation. Even as we in the United States commemorate and celebrate this event, we know our work at home is not complete to make our nation a just and tolerant place for all of our people. Around the world, there is also much to be done to combat bigotry, discrimination and hate. We applaud the work of the three Personal Representatives of the Chair in Office, of the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues, and of the High Commissioner on National Minorities. At the Tirana Tolerance Conference earlier this year, we urged the OSCE community to move beyond meetings to *actions*. Specifically, we call upon the participating States to:

Support and fully utilize ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Unit. The Tolerance Unit has received numerous requests for training in handling hate crimes and for support of ad hoc tolerance meetings in addition to the five annual human dimension meetings. Additionally, there are many calls for increased monitoring and capacity building tools to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, violence and discrimination against LGBT persons, and violent extremism. Funding for the Tolerance Unit has declined in spite of its increasing workload. Providing increased funding for ODIHR within the unified budget and through extra-budgetary projects would support the current work of the Tolerance Unit and allow for its expansion in the face of growing intolerance.

Fulfill OSCE hate crimes commitments. Despite the Athens Ministerial Decision on Combating Hate Crimes and the adoption of other related commitments, the OSCE Annual Hate Crimes report documented more than 1,300 bias-motivated crimes to date this year and more than 5,000 last year. Eight EU States have experienced increases in hate crimes, with

several studies suggesting that hate crimes may be underreported by as much as 60 percent. In accordance with OSCE commitments, participating States should monitor and evaluate their national hate crimes policies and initiatives, provide disaggregated national hate crimes data to the Tolerance Unit, provide support to victims and ensure their access to justice, and use the Tolerance Unit capacity building measures as needed to improve current efforts.

Strengthen Efforts to combat anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Muslims. Both anti-Semitism and intolerance and discrimination against Muslims are on the rise, as evidenced by physical assaults, desecration of cemeteries and places of worship, and defacement of Holocaust memorials. In my own country, nearly two out of three religion-based hate crimes are committed against Jews. In France, in 2012, the Jewish community recorded a 58 percent increase over the previous year in the number of anti-Semitic attacks.

Developments such as these not only led the OSCE to hold this June its first experts' conference on the security of members of Jewish communities, but have also highlighted the need for participating States to review and strengthen efforts to combat anti-Semitism as outlined in the Berlin Declaration.

In Hungary, anti-Semitic rhetoric by Jobbik party leaders still sometimes goes unchallenged by the government. In Greece, the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn has repeatedly been linked to anti-Semitic, anti-immigrant, and racist activities. Many similar political parties have resorted to political rhetoric against the Roma community and immigrants, especially those from Muslim countries, contributing to their societal exclusion and intimidation.

In France in 2012, the Committee Against Islamophobia reported a 57 percent increase over the previous year in anti-Muslim acts. This year in the United Kingdom, in a two-week period alone after the shooting of a British soldier in London by an extremist Muslim, there were more than 16 attacks on mosques and other buildings. In Russia, the government conducted raids on mosques and detained hundreds of Muslims, raising concerns about the vagueness and broad application the extremism law.

We welcome the steps the Polish government is taking to find a solution to allow the practice of ritual animal slaughter to continue in Poland, as it is an essential part of religious practice for many faiths, including Jews and Muslims who adhere to kosher and halal dietary laws. We encourage Poland to continue to work diligently to protect Jewish, Muslim, and other religious practices.

Strengthen efforts to promote religious tolerance, including toward Christians and members of other religions. Onerous religious registration requirements and restrictive religion laws in several participating States discriminate against members of so-called *nontraditional* religions, including Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientologists, and readers of Said Nursi. Consequently, some religious organizations were unable to legally build, rent, or purchase places of worship and their members faced harassment and even criminal charges because of their religion. We will discuss this in detail in Session 7.

Fulfill OSCE commitments relating to the human rights of Roma individuals, and support the Roma Action Plan. We will discuss this in detail during next week's session.

Strengthen OSCE tools for combating racism and xenophobia. In my own country, many hate crimes continue to be motivated by racial bias. In Greece, attacks on immigrants have

been escalating, while Sweden has seen an increase in hate crimes against Roma individuals and persons of African origin. A barrage of racist discourse met the appointment of Italy's first Minister of African descent, Cécile Kyenge.

It is regrettable, therefore, that no agreement was reached on a Ministerial Decision on Racism and Xenophobia last year. To mark the tenth anniversary of the OSCE's first *Conference on Tolerance and the Fight Against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination*, the participating States, in cooperation with ODIHR and other relevant OSCE institutions, should elaborate an Action Plan, and direct ODIHR to publish a report on racism and xenophobia in the OSCE region that includes a focus on African descendants. In light of the *European Network Against Racism* report detailing the high levels of discrimination faced by people of African descent and the many racially motivated murders and violent assaults against people of African origin reported in the OSCE Annual Hate Crimes Report, we also encourage ODIHR to continue and expand its hate crimes outreach, training, and monitoring efforts to communities of African descent in the OSCE region.

Condemn and combat violations of the human rights of all persons and attacks on their inherent dignity, including the human rights and human dignity of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender individuals. The brutal attacks on LGBT persons around the world and in the OSCE region are appalling and utterly unacceptable. These crimes should be condemned, thoroughly investigated and prosecuted by all participating States. It is deeply concerning when participating States, which have committed themselves under Principle VII of the Helsinki Final Act to respect the human rights of all human beings -- rights that derive from "the inherent dignity of the human person" -- take actions that contribute to an environment where violence against LGBT persons is tolerated and the exercise of fundamental freedoms by LGBT individuals and their supporters is criminalized. We are especially concerned about the anti-gay "propaganda" legislation being adopted and enforced in Russia and the concurrent rise in violence against LGBT persons there, and about the criminalization of homosexual acts in a number of participating States.

Thank you.