



Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting

PROMOTION OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION: RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND OSCE COMMITMENTS

3-4th July 2014
Hofburg, Vienna

SCHEDULE AND OVERVIEW OF SIDE EVENTS

The Helsinki Document of 1992 (Chapter IV) called for increasing the openness of OSCE activities and expanding the role of NGOs. In particular, in paragraph (15) of Chapter IV the participating States decided to facilitate during OSCE meetings informal discussion meetings between representatives of participating States and of NGOs, and to provide encouragement to NGOs organizing seminars on OSCE-related issues. In line with this decision, NGOs, governments, and other participants are encouraged to organize side meetings on relevant issues of their choice.

The side events below are organized and scheduled exclusively at the request of participants of the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting. The descriptions have been provided by the organizers. They have been lightly edited by ODIHR for language but not for content. Responsibility for the content remains with the organizers. Neither the text below nor the events themselves necessarily reflect the views of the OSCE.

Thursday, 3 July	
<p><i>Title: How to combat cyber hate crimes while respecting freedom of expression: the challenge of countering anti-Muslim hatred on the Internet</i> <i>Convenor: EMISCO – European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion</i> <i>Time: 13.00 – 15.00</i> <i>Venue: Segmentgalerie I</i> <i>Language: English</i></p>	
Friday, 4 July	Friday, 4 July
<p><i>Title: Journalists at Risk for Writing about Torture and Fighting for Human Rights</i> <i>Convenor: Civic Solidarity Platform, with co-sponsorship of several delegations to OSCE (Canada, EU and US)</i> <i>Time: 12.00 – 14.00</i> <i>Venue: Meeting Room 201</i> <i>Language: English</i></p>	<p><i>Title: “Hate Speech” Laws in the OSCE Region: A Growing Threat to Freedom of Expression</i> <i>Convenor: Alliance Defending Freedom</i> <i>Time: 12.00 – 14.00</i> <i>Venue: Segmentgalerie I</i> <i>Language: English</i></p>

OVERVIEW OF SIDE EVENTS
as submitted by the organizers

Thursday, 3 July

Time: 13.00 – 15.00
Venue: Segmentgalerie I
Title: How to combat cyber hate crimes while respecting freedom of expression: the challenge of countering anti-Muslim hatred on the Internet
Convenor: EMISCO – European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion
Language: English

Summary: As a largely unregulated medium of communication, the internet has accommodated a torrent of hate speech, distributed freely and without any control across social media. The medium has been used by fanatics to spread malicious information and stir up hatred against particular groups in our societies. In this instance, the power of internet communication becomes a dangerous liability. Over the last ten years or so Muslim communities have suffered from such malicious campaigns of hate speech conducted through internet social media. Already targeted by some populist media, politicians, and public intellectuals, already suffering from everyday discrimination within their societies after 9/11, they have found themselves so often denigrated by hate propaganda spreading through social media.

Is it possible to continue to tolerate this kind of (ab)use of the free internet - and of social media in particular? Is there a way to combat hate speech and exhortation to violence fostered by online malicious propaganda while still safeguarding the fundamental rights of freedom of expression? Indeed, is the internet sphere different from the public sphere, where there are stringent laws against hate speech and where expressions of discrimination and deceitful propaganda against others is severely prosecuted? Can the right to freedom of expression exist in a total sense - as an absolute right - on the internet, even when it actively contributes to the violation of the freedom of others or even places their welfare at risk? Is it possible or indeed desirable to limit abuses of freedom of expression in order to protect and advance the very concept of freedom more meaningfully for society as a whole? If so, what checks and balances should be put in place and how can they be enforced consistently? What is the role of internet providers, NGOs and state authorities in this dual process of advancing freedom, on the one hand, and protecting society from diffusion of hatred, on the other?

EMISCO aims to address these questions and wishes to explore ways in the wave of anti-Muslim hatred fostered through the use of the internet by extremists but also reproduced in mainstream media can be effectively combated without endangering the new medium's most cherished contribution - freedom of expression and democratic empowerment. We need to explore how we can respond to those who deliberately and cynically abuse this very freedom of expression against the interests of others; and how we can effectively limit and/or counter their dangerous propaganda, using as primary defence the very concept of freedom and fundamental human rights.

Friday, 4 July

Time: 12.00 – 14.00
Venue: Meeting Room 201
Title: Journalists at Risk for Writing about Torture and Fighting for Human Rights
Convenor: Civic Solidarity Platform, with co-sponsorship of several delegations to OSCE (Canada, EU and US)
Language: English

Summary: Journalists who write about torture and other human rights violations face high risks of reprisals for their work in many countries across the OSCE region. They are increasingly subjected to pressure and harassment by state and private actors, are illegally detained, convicted in unfair and politically motivated trials, receive threats, are physically attacked and even murdered. Many governments do not take adequate legislative and practical measures to protect journalists, investigate cases of threats to and attacks against them and bring perpetrators to justice. Quite often they deny the very existence of the problem and refuse to cooperate in the framework of OSCE to strengthen the existing OSCE commitments in this field, adopt decisions of the Ministerial Council and agree on practical steps to implement the commitments. Four courageous leading journalists from several OSCE participating states (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Azerbaijan) will tell their stories, share their experiences of writing about human rights issues and facing pressure for their work.

Refreshments will be provided

Time: 12.00 – 14.00
Venue: Segmentgalerie I
Title: “Hate Speech” Laws in the OSCE Region: a Growing Threat to Freedom of Expression
Convenor: Alliance Defending Freedom
Language: English

Summary: When should freedom of speech be limited in a free society? This is the question that will be considered during this Side Event. It will be argued that although some limitations on speech will always exist, ill-conceived “hate speech” laws enforced through the penal law should never be considered a valid restriction on speech. The Side Event will provide a history and overview of Europe’s “hate speech” laws, as well as their present day application. Numerous real case examples will be cited, and the role of the OSCE, Participating States and Civil Society will be discussed.

Refreshments will be provided