

## United States Mission to the OSCE

### **Session 10: Tolerance and Non-discrimination I**

*Prevention and response to hate crimes in the OSCE area;  
Follow-up to the 2009 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on hate crimes;  
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 Dr. Michael Haltzel  
Head of the U.S. delegation  
to the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
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Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

This past year has been marked by both achievements and challenges in efforts to address intolerance and discrimination in OSCE participating States. In the United States, the election of the first African-American president marks a milestone in what must be continuing efforts to address racism and extend equal opportunity and fair treatment to all Americans. Even so, we have more to do, as indicated by recent reports of hate crimes and other forms of intolerance in my country.

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that, although the overall number of hate crimes has dropped in the United States, from 2003 to 2007 there was a 40% increase in hate crimes targeting Latinos and other persons perceived to be immigrants, and from 2006 to 2007 an approximately 6% increase in violent crimes related to sexual orientation. The Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil society monitor, has reported that the number of hate groups in the United States has increased by more than 50% since 2000.

The election of a minority president, a weakened economy, and anti-immigration fears are believed to account in part for these trends, which were tragically illustrated by the recent murder of an African-American security guard by a white supremacist at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. In an effort to address these negative developments, Congress is considering legislation to strengthen our hate crime laws, with the hope that it will reach President Obama's desk later this year.

Unfortunately, we are not alone in the need to address this problem. Data collected by both governmental and non-governmental monitors have recorded increases over the past two years in violent hate crimes motivated by racism and xenophobia in more than ten other OSCE participating States. Roma, Muslims, and persons of African and Asian origin most often are the targets. Racist violence against migrants, Roma, and stateless persons remains gravely underreported. Acts of violence and human rights abuses toward individuals because of their sexual orientation or gender identity are also a worrying -- and increasing -- trend that often goes

unnoticed. The extreme nature of violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender individuals has a chilling effect on these individuals speaking openly and advocating for their rights.

These trends are illustrated by many disturbing cases, including the brutal murder of a Muslim woman by a bigot in Germany, a series of 50 violent attacks against Roma in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia that have left seven children dead, the killing of a transgendered activist in her home in Turkey, and the escalation of manifestations of anti-Semitism in response to Middle East tensions that have included Molotov cocktails thrown at synagogues in France, and calls to boycott Jewish businesses in Italy and Turkey. Recent surveys indicate a high level of anti-Semitism in the OSCE region.

Anti-Christian manifestations are also of deep concern, from the firebombing and defacing of churches and the disruption of religious services to physical attacks on Christians and the desecration of cemeteries in the United States, the Netherlands, Turkey, and the Balkans.

With reports increasing of hate crimes and other forms of intolerance in OSCE participating States, we must all commit to do more to combat this behavior. We call on Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to decriminalize homosexuality. We also note that many participating States still lack adequate legislation to address hate crimes, and only 14 of the 56 participating States collect meaningful hate crime data that include specificity and disaggregation to inform appropriate responses. Additionally, when implementing policies, states must ensure that police thoroughly investigate offenses, including the motivation for them; develop data collection systems to monitor the frequency of incidents motivated by bias and to record prosecution outcomes; and encourage victims and witnesses to report such incidents, especially in cases where there has been tension between police and victim communities.

We must not only continue to support but also utilize the specialized work of ODIHR's tolerance and non-discrimination unit. The unit's work since 2004 has included capacity building and training for civil society and law enforcement and has issued more than ten publications focused on combating intolerance, including the Third Annual Hate Crimes Report.

We welcome ODIHR's recently published *Hate Crime Laws: A Practical Guide*, which provides guidance designed to establish a common framework for improving responses to hate crimes. We are proud that two U.S. community leaders played a role in developing the guide and served as participants in meetings of the National Points of Contact on Combating Hate Crimes. The 2009 meeting on National Points of Contacts might usefully consider as the topic for their next meeting "building trust and cooperation between law enforcement agencies and victims of hate crimes, their communities and civil society groups." We hope that civil society groups and representatives of specialized anti-discrimination bodies will play a continued role in future meetings and events. In light of recent reports of hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims, Roma, and persons of migrant descent, we also welcome increased activity from ODIHR in addressing issues impacting these groups.

Mr. Moderator,

We hope the Ministerial Council will welcome the contribution of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office and support their reappointment by the incoming CiO as a valuable mechanism for addressing the problem of intolerance and discrimination plaguing our states. Their continued focus on distinct and specific forms of intolerance provides the opportunity for a concerted response at a political level as specific problems arise. We hope that the Personal Representatives will continue to address and investigate the resurgence of anti-Semitism associated with increased tensions in the Middle East and increases in anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim, and anti-Roma hate crimes and other forms of intolerance. Finally, the United States would welcome a high-level conference in 2010 on combating anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance as an important opportunity to evaluate progress and implementation in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.