



United States Mission to the OSCE

Working Session 14

Tolerance and non-discrimination II, including: 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
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The United States firmly believes that strengthening our joint efforts to combat anti-Semitism as well as intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, Christians, and members of other religions is a key element of ensuring security and respect for all people in the OSCE region. We commend the sustained engagement of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office's Personal Representative on Anti-Semitism, Rabbi Baker, and the ODIHR Tolerance Unit with the Jewish community following the tragic events in Paris and Copenhagen earlier this year. We welcome the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's appointment of U.S. Senator Benjamin Cardin to serve as Special Representative on Anti-Semitism, Racism, and Intolerance.

We applaud efforts to launch an OSCE anti-Semitism toolkit and convene stakeholders early next year under the leadership of the German Chairmanship. This will help maintain focus on these issues and coordinate resources to counter increasing rates of anti-Semitic acts, ranging from physical assaults to death, and provide better security for Jewish communities. Interfaith coalition efforts, such as the symbolic rings of peace around synagogues that took place in **Denmark** and **Norway**, brought communities together at a time when anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim hate crimes increased, doubling from the previous year in some countries. We urge participating States to support ODIHR efforts to strengthen civil society coalitions against intolerance. ODIHR's outreach to Muslim women and other efforts to combat anti-Muslim prejudice are worthy of additional investment and expansion.

We are also concerned about discrimination against Christians in some participating States, particularly where the state grants special privileges to one church and excludes others – such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and certain Catholic and Orthodox communities – by imposing unreasonable registration requirements and making restitution of property and construction of new houses of worship difficult. In the context of the OSCE's work to combat anti-Semitism and other forms of bigotry, we have frequently noted the crucial role that political leaders play – either in fostering tolerance and inclusion or in whipping up prejudice. We remain concerned that the official formation of a "Europe of Nations and Freedom" grouping within the **European Parliament** would allow EU funds and other resources to be employed in the spread of hate throughout the region. It is our hope that the Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup of EU Parliamentarians focused on countering prejudice and discrimination can help counter this grouping.

We urge the EU and individual governments to ensure sustained attention to anti-Semitism by appointing envoys for that purpose. We also agree with the closing statement of the Swiss Chair-in-Office at last year's Berlin Conference that the Working Definition of Anti-Semitism disseminated by the EU Monitoring Center remains a useful tool for governments and civil society in explaining how anti-Zionism is frequently a mask for anti-Semitism.

The United States has seen our own incidents of religious intolerance, and as a result the Department of Justice (DOJ) works to protect the right to practice one's faith freely and without discrimination. In January, a federal court in Minnesota entered a consent order to resolve allegations that the City of St. Anthony Village violated an Islamic association's rights when it denied the association a permit to open a prayer center. In November, the DOJ's Civil Rights Division reached a settlement agreement with a Georgia school district, resolving allegations that a Sikh secondary student was harassed.

The ODIHR Tolerance Unit's current activities include increased efforts to combat anti-Semitism; hate crimes training for law enforcement and prosecutors, including recent MOU's with **Bulgaria** and **Poland**; engagement with vulnerable Muslim and African-descent communities; and work to promote the security of religious and other vulnerable communities in **Ukraine**.

We urge participating States to support these efforts by increasing funding for ODIHR within the unified budget and through extra-budgetary projects. We welcome the launch of ODIHR's hate crimes website late last year. Thirty-two participating States have fulfilled the commitment to provide hate crimes data to ODIHR; we encourage the remaining participating States to do so without delay.

More work is needed to ensure that the data is understood and is inclusive and accurate for all affected communities, including for hate crimes committed against persons with disabilities. While we welcome increased attention within the OSCE region to the rights of persons with disabilities, underreporting of hate crimes against members of this vulnerable population continues to be a problem.