



**OSCE**  
**SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING**

Freedom of Religion and Belief

Vienna, 22 June 2017

Thank You Mr Moderator, my name is Veysel FILIZ, I'm the Spokesperson of EMISCO, European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion. Let me first thank the Austrian Chairmanship for organising this timely SHDM on the issues related to Freedom of Religion and Belief.

Our organization had worked very hard to create specific recommendations today that we provide to ODIHR. I would like to limit my few minutes intervention to share with you the very bad feelings of Muslim Communities in the West of Vienna. Clearly, they are deeply worried about the rise of attacks motivated by the anti-Muslim hatred especially since the Paris, Brussels and London terrorist attack. We declare unambiguously that international developments, including acts of terror perpetrated by violent individuals or groups self-identifying with Islam, can never justify the normalization of the intolerance against Muslims. We are still waiting for the concretization of the Ministerial Declaration on intolerance against Muslims which will help a lot to ensure the effective struggle of this rising form of specific hatred. The huge rise of attacks on Mosques and the recent attacks against Muslims in Finsbury Park or in Virginia Mosque is creating a feeling that Muslim Communities are today no more equal citizens which should be protected by the State.

In this way, we condemn all type of discrimination against Muslims and endeavor to prevent and protect against attacks directed at Muslim communities across the OSCE region, whether on persons or on places of worship or religious objects;

We note the disproportionate and specific impact of intolerance against Muslims on women, who are exposed to intolerance, discrimination and hate crime when trying to access their rights to, inter alia, education and employment. The recent decision of the European Court of Justice, which allows private companies to adopt internal rule prohibiting the visible wearing of any political, philosophical or religious sign in the workplace (this is first time that laicite/neutrality is quoted for PRIVATE companies). The Court states that this does not constitute direct discrimination based on religion or belief, but we all know that Muslim women are targeted. In the same time, the Court recognizes that such rules may result in indirect discrimination and putting in particular disadvantage persons adhering to a particular religion or belief (so the Court understands that this puts Muslim women in a situation of discrimination), but the Court states that such indirect discrimination may be objectively justified by a legitimate aim. And the Court states that this legitimate aim can be a policy of political, philosophical and religious neutrality. The Court also states that such internal rule can apply only for the workers who come into contact with customers. It means that a Muslim women should not be seen by anyone allowing businesses to

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feed into prejudices of their costumers. This example is a clear sign of the paranoia which is pushing our institutions to adopt some stupid commitments.

We acknowledge the essential contribution made by civil society in preventing and responding to intolerance against Muslims, including by providing psychological and legal support to victims of hate crime and discrimination, as well as their engagement with local authorities and equality bodies.

The hate-mongering politicians of the radical right are apparently succeeding in swapping a racist agenda for an Islamophobic one; but it is mainstream politicians, intellectuals, and media who have smoothed the way for anti-Muslim bigotry to move closer to the mainstream.

With political trust at an all-time low, some mainstream politicians are taking advantage of voter apathy in national and local politics to advance their own cause. Islamophobia thus has become a successful political tool to mobilize the masses. The construction of the Muslim other has become a useful tool to distract from own failures and to justify miseries elsewhere.

That is why, EMISCO is focusing on the issue of political Islamophobia that is on the increase and is more dangerous than the far right anti-Islam movements. We demand the use of Islamophobia **in the official documents** as an established concept, defined as a form of discrimination and racism, as well as an **`orchestrated fear`** targeting individuals and communities based on their alleged adherence to the Islamic faith.

#### **We call upon OSCE and Participating States to:**

- Encourage political leaders and public figures to speak out strongly and promptly when anti-Muslim incidents occur as well as for other majority religions;
- Many countries do not have in their criminal code the legal protections against islamophobia or they have it but the police is not recording the cases separately on this issue. We need cases to be segregated by motivation and also by gender. So that we can better see all aspects of this problem.
- As the Declaration on enhancing efforts to combat anti-Semitism, which was adopted in Basel in 2014, the OSCE Ministerial Council can adopt, as promised by some delegations, a 'Decision' on intolerance against Muslims and Christians. It's very sad for all of us to not have any Decision on intolerance against Muslims until today.
- Take steps to effectively address intolerance against Muslims in the OSCE region, both in preventing and responding to incidents by implementing concrete measures in every level;
- Implement existing OSCE commitments related to monitoring hate crime and collecting relevant data on incidents targeting Muslim communities, ensuring that data is disaggregated to show specific bias motivations related to religion;

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- Ensure that security measures and anti-terrorism efforts are not directed at any specific ethnic, religious or cultural group, in their design, implementation or impact;
- Collaborate with local civil society groups, and Muslim communities, through effective partnerships and strengthened dialogue to address intolerance, discrimination and to promote mutual respect and understanding.
- OSCE political bodies and institutions should urge participating States to provide funding for independent civil society groups among Muslim communities working on issues of Islamophobia.

**We call upon the ODIHR to:**

- The issue of using islamophobia as the term concerning the anti-muslim hatred is still on-going. EMISCO works on that issue years ago. The last definition of Professor Chris Allen is also veru good. ODIHR should take new steps to move forward on this question.
- Facilitate open discussion and constructive dialogue among and between government officials, civil society, and religious or belief communities with the aim of implementing OSCE commitments on the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief;
- Highlight patterns on intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, in order to better understand and proactively address intolerance and discrimination against Muslims;
- Foster broad civil society co-operations, and the sharing of best practices among stakeholders, on educational initiatives, as well as other measures to raise awareness of intolerance against Muslims;
- ODIHR should develop and promote new guidelines for combating and preventing hate crimes against Muslims, including legislation, systems of registration and collection of statistical data on hate crimes, assistance to victims, etc., based on best practices and decisions of international human rights bodies, including decisions of the UN Committee for Human Rights and jurisprudence of ECHR over the last decade.
- Presentation of ODIHR's annual report on Islamophobia and its discussion by participating States should be included in the agenda of the Permanent Council and Human Dimension Committee.

In conclusion, EMISCO believes that Islamophobia as a political tool is more dangerous than any other narrative because in the hands of powerful politicians, it is becoming a norm and thus a big hindrance in the way of normal minority-majority co-existence. Be that as it may, OSCE must stand firm and not let European continent slip into the intolerant past. We must join hands to slay the dragon of Islamophobia and build our societies again with everyone's help, Muslim and non-Muslim, alike. It is time we listen to the voices of sanity, not hate.

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