

OSCE HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON TOLERANCE AND  
NON-DISCRIMINATION

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**Session 6: Addressing public manifestations of intolerance, in accordance with the OSCE commitments and promoting understanding through open dialogue in the media, including the Internet**

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We all agree that hate crimes constitute a serious breach of human rights and have a deep impact on victim communities. The OSCE community has underscored on multiple occasions, that if left unaddressed, hate crimes would pose a potential threat to domestic and international security, thus undermining societal cohesion and sowing the seeds of conflict and wider-scale violence. Yet if we think of guiding our actions with the motto frequently used by doctors that it is easier to prevent than cure, we should be looking at the root causes of hate crime, and hate speech, in particular.

Recently we have been witnessing tendency of hate speech and discriminatory ideologies infiltrating the state structures and governing parties. Statements from highest podiums containing incitement to hatred against other nations have become more frequent. Open institutionalization of racism is even more deplorable, when not only harassment of the other group, race, nationality is encouraged but it is openly accompanied by militaristic rhetoric, and any contacts with the so-called “enemy” nation is prohibited and even persecuted and prosecuted. Such policies inevitably result in fear and intimidation with ever broadening and widening circle of possible victims of discrimination and hate motivated crimes. It results in radicalization of the society which serve as fertile ground for extremist ideologies and discriminatory behavior and policies.

In recent years incitement to hatred towards Armenians and Armenia, as well as apparent war propaganda by Azerbaijan has become a matter of major concern. Media and the Internet, as providing the widest possible audience are being increasingly used for dissemination of national hatred. Manifestations of intolerance and propagation of xenophobia towards Armenians are not only gross violations of human rights but also raise concerns with regard to ensuring peace, security and stability in the region, as the very recent incidents on the Line of Contact vividly demonstrated. A number of well-known, independent monitoring bodies engaged in the protection of human rights, especially those from the UN and the Council of Europe have expressed their deep concern with respect to such behavior. Armenia has repeatedly voiced its concerns in this regard, calling the international community, and the OSCE among others, to undertake measures aimed at halting and preventing such policies and manifestations.

Armenians, as survivors of genocide are very sensitive to any expression of intolerance, racism and xenophobia. The Government policy is pursuing all efforts aimed at enhancing prevention of genocide through enhanced international efforts with increased cooperation among all treaty

bodies and special procedures and rapporteurs that deal with societal manifestations of incitement to hatred, intolerance and discriminatory behavior.

Genocide is usually the result of an evolution, an integral part of which is the development of genocidal mentality, i.e. the willingness of governments and their citizens to engage in genocidal policies as defined in the Convention culminating in mass killing of innocent people. In order to justify their actions they alienate the group by devaluing or dehumanizing its members. Hate speech is most often the tool, and when widely proposed and approved in a society, especially by the leadership, it creates fertile ground for re-irruption of historical hatreds, unhealed wounds and unleashing of virulent genocidal mentality.

The international community is obliged to be vigilant over the development of situations and events where actual legitimization and institutionalization of genocidal mentality in a given society begins to take place, the military gives the orders to kill the targeted group, the legal system justifies the perpetrators, the belief system ignores or rationalizes the killings, the educational system ignores or trains students to applaud killing, and various institutions of the society that were supposed to protect the rights and security of their citizens become co-opted and corrupted as supporters of the genocide.

Early strong reaction by the international community over systematic and egregious violations of human rights, especially of collective rights, alarm raised by the treaty bodies following the implementation of human rights commitments by member states could become a deterrent and inhibit the evolution toward discrimination, ethnic-hatred and genocide.

In this respect, we would like to recommend:

To hold accountable all those that incite or provide platforms for hatred, and the leaders, first and foremost,

To collect data on media-based incitement to hatred in order to assess the hate-crime situation,  
To carry out study on the relationship between hate speech, hate crimes and extremism,

Create an urgent appeal procedure whereby appropriate measures would be undertaken to respond to hate-based issues raised by Participating States to assess the situation by dispatching a rapporteur or group of independent experts,

To consider rapid-response capacities and modalities to respond to situations of dissemination of hatred, hate crimes, intolerance, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination, also taking into consideration and consulting with existing UN and Council of Europe mechanisms and special procedures,

To continue the discussions with the internet providers to come up with workable solutions to combat effectively hate speech, hate crime and manifestations of discrimination.