



WORKING SESSION 7:

My name is Gözde Taskaya and I am here as a representative for Netzwerk Muslimische Zivilgesellschaft.

We, as an organization are trying to combat different forms of racism and discrimination towards minorities. One of our focuses is to combat Islamophobia. Therefore, we have to call attention to the fact that especially Muslim women have become a target of hate in times of populism and anti-Muslim sentiment.

The documentation center for Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism reported an increase of 62% compared to the previous year. Besides we could clearly see a rise of hate crimes and hate incidents during the presidential election campaign.

As new national elections are coming up in October, populist positions became a major drive for Austrian politics. The policy of the government has ultimately adapted far-right demands as well as its rhetoric. Unfortunately, different forms of racism have become mainstream because the media and politicians support it by using wordings which are very dangerous. Just to give you an example: words like "Muslim" or "Islam" are equated with terms such as "Islamism". These narratives further not only intolerance, but also hate against minorities and destroy social cohesion.

We have reached a level where newspapers in Austria are printing headlines such as "close borders for Muslims!" as well as politicians making shameless jokes about Muslim citizens. We won't accept this kind of discrimination as a part of freedom of expression or freedom of speech.

But these hateful narratives further not only islamophobia, but also anti-Semitism, Xenophobia and discrimination towards all other minorities - especially refugees.

Austria is collecting official data on the matter of hate crimes. But still police officers are often not willing to report hate crimes and incidents or they don't treat these cases properly. This shows that many police officers are not trained sufficiently on the matter. We had a case where someone threw beer on a Muslim woman, or people pulled down the headgear of another women - and all these kind of cases were not reported because officials argued that this wouldn't have been a physical injury. In fact, they should have mentioned that it should have been reported and treated as a hate-crime. But it's very important to do so, and for this I ask my country to adopt these points I mentioned as hate-crimes, because these cases occur more and more often and we definitely need to prevent it. This is the best way, my country can build trusting relationships to its Muslim citizens again.



Recommendation:

We should break down stereotypes that have been perpetuated through negative and islamophobic media coverage. For this, we recommend mandatory education and awareness-raising to prevent intolerance and discrimination especially among police, public officers and teachers. We advocate educational work in cooperation with different Muslim associations in the respective cities and countries.

Furthermore, we would highly recommend ODIHR to recognize the term **Islamophobia**. We need to address and prevent hate-crimes, hate-incidents and discrimination towards Muslims.