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**THE ROLE OF PRO-ACTIVE COMMUNITY POLICING
IN PROMOTING TOLERANCE IN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES
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The OSCE is one of the most important organizations highlighting the direct link between a society's efforts to promote tolerance and the security of its citizens. Nowhere is that connection more real than for those policing diverse communities where the potential for conflict and violence is a part of one's daily routine.

Since the establishment of the State in 1948, Israeli society has been a rich mosaic of different religious and ethnic groups and our society has grown increasingly diverse with each passing year as immigrants from all over the world have sought refuge here. This has challenged law enforcement to navigate complex interethnic and cultural understandings and norms, not only to safeguard officers on duty, but to prevent the escalation of tension in the community into violent conflict.

To be sure, there are lessons and policy models from the OSCE region that could be applied by law enforcement in Israel and the other Mediterranean Partner States. But we in the Mediterranean region may have experience addressing some of the challenges that OSCE Participating States are may be facing. Even in the absence of broad hate crime data collection and response efforts, police are vital actors in addressing intolerance, inter-group strife, and crimes motivated by bigotry.

Many people think of Israel as a country made up of two communities, Arab and Jewish. But there is incredible diversity within even this tiny country. There are Jewish Israelis from Ethiopia, Russia, and all over the world and Bedouin, Druze, Circassian and other minorities living together. Among minorities in Israel, as I'm sure is the case in many states represented here today, officers are the leading visible presence of government in minority neighborhoods and the most tangible link between those communities and the state. The ability of to find a common language and build bridges to minority communities can mean the difference between life and death, between alleviating tension or lighting a match in a tinder box.

In the limited time I have, I would like to focus on one recent challenge I experienced and outline some of the lessons learned that I believe embody sound principles of community policing that could be applied in other OSCE and Med Partner States. Of course, it's difficult to talk about community policing as a tool in the area of tolerance alone. It has benefits across so many areas of police work. But it is rooted in a desire to overcome bigotry, stereotypes and misunderstandings and to promote tolerance among communities and also understanding of the police culture as well.

As Deputy Commander of the Northern Command, I was involved in one of the most trying law enforcement challenges in recent years, a rash of riots in October of 2000.

Our relationship was one of deep antagonism and suspicion, and we knew that a long term effort build a new relationship based on mutual respect and trust would be essential. While community policing policies began to be implemented in the early 1990s, the October 2000 riots proved to be a turning point in the relationship between the police and Arab citizenry of the area. Following the riots, a serious inquiry exposed serious gaps in the trust between police and the Arab population. We gave considerable thought to the best way to improve the situation since we viewed this relationship as critical to doing our jobs as a matter of routine and during times of heightened tension.

Proactive Police Leadership and Increased Community Policing Centers (CPCs) -

It was clear that we had to strengthen community based partnerships, to work harder to overcome lack of understanding by police of the community and also to break stereotypes the citizens have of police. We became determined to forge a system where Arab citizens could feel more “at home” interacting with police in their own language, and establishing Community Policing Centers (CPC) in as many villages as possible. The CPC’s go beyond meeting daily needs of the neighborhood, they are empowered to take on proactive campaigns on issues like violence prevention or road safety. These activities not only serve the community, they also forge important partnerships between local municipalities and police to work together to handle sensitive issues in a comprehensive way. There had been a move to establish community policing centers, but following the riots the number of CPCs in the North grew from 7 to 47 within a very short time. We supplement our initiatives with proactive outreach in Arabic in the Arabic language media.

Minority Recruitment. Another critical improvement was a proactive campaign to recruit community volunteers and enlist them into police service. It was clear that, in order for the community not to view the police as “other” they should see themselves well represented in the ranks of law enforcement. Through this recruitment, the police opened an important channel of communication to the Arab community through its own leaders and opinion makers. 20 percent of the police force in the North themselves are from minority communities such as Druze, Bedouin and Christians.

Core Values Education as a basic element of police training. A law enforcement officer can only be true to his role and mission if he fully integrates a set of humane universal values. We benefit from important partnerships with NGOs that serve as models for how police can enlist the support of civil society groups. Some examples:

- Every officer in the Northern Command, which serves a largely Arab population, receives mandatory training on sensitivity, bigotry and discrimination, and other issues such as limits on the use of force. Nationally, the Anti-Defamation League has partnered with the Border Police to deliver it’s a World of Difference anti-bias training to border police, a branch of Israel’s law enforcement that confronts these issues as a matter of routine.
- Another interesting part of this training, officers visit the Center for Humanistic Education at the Holocaust and Jewish Resistance Heritage

Museum. Exploring the lessons of the Holocaust is an excellent platform for discussion of law enforcement values.

Understanding of cultural and religious tradition. In my own experience in the Northern region of the country, we were enriched by taking time to educate ourselves about the rich Arab traditions related to conflict resolution. We learned that when we made concerted efforts to listen, show respect, and attend to the needs of the community on their own cultural terms, we forged bonds that helped us better address conflicts. This close partnership was essential in helping us navigate cases where traditional religious law clashed with the laws of the state. I learned from the wisdom of the Arab religious leaders and came to appreciate how Arab tradition can offer sensible and logical solutions in so many cases.

It is important to mention that the process of education and sensitizing is not only necessary in minority communities but in working with the diverse groups of Jewish communities. Especially given that we have so many officers who are not Jewish, this becomes more important.

Where there is a will to do so, police can initiate education programs that can help officers embody the values of appreciating and serving a diverse community. "Holidays in Uniform" is an initiative which exposes police to learning about the holidays of all faiths and groups. We learned about the Druze prophet Shu'eib and the various Ethiopian festivals.

CONCLUSION: I cannot stress enough the importance of creating mutual respect and understanding between law enforcement officers and minority community leaders. The trust that we had built did not stand the test of the October 2000 riots. The whole of Israel's society was pained when these bridges of trust broke. However, it provided an occasion for penetrating reflection and compelled new creative thinking and initiatives. The Israeli reality is complex and the challenges seem never-ending. But so is the hunger to innovate and not to be satisfied until all of Israel's citizenry feel secure, safe and at home.

There is a wealth of experience to share and learn from among police in such a vast region. I hope this discussion spurs follow up consultation among law enforcement and community policing experts in this region. Police in all countries are united by common challenges, they speak a common language and share an understanding of their vital role in communities. My lifelong experience building bridges between diverse populations in Israel would be enriched by continuing this conversation with counterparts in other states and I urge the OSCE to consider ways to facilitate such activity.