

**OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism and on Other Forms of Intolerance  
Cordoba, 8 and 9 June 2005**

**Session 5**

**Statement by Human Rights First**

Nine months ago the OSCE met in Brussels to confront the challenge of Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination. Then, as now, the participating states of the OSCE gathered to address the steps required to combat the rising tide of violence generated by antisemitism and other forms of racism and intolerance.

Participating states reaffirmed commitments to undertake practical measures to combat hate crimes and to use the real potential of the OSCE to assist in these endeavors. Among the most important steps forward were commitments to give the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, ODIHR, a central role in assisting participating states in the fight against hate crimes and discrimination.

Pledges were made by OSCE states in 2004 to provide statistics on hate crimes and their response to these incidents to ODIHR. And of course, three personal representatives to the chairman in office were subsequently appointed to provide high-level support to the OSCE's efforts to check the tide of racist violence and related intolerance.

In the course of this conference, ODIHR has informed us of the limited and inadequate implementation thus far by most OSCE states of their commitment to provide reliable data on hate crimes in their countries.

In most cases, the poor government responses reflect multiple factors. These include: laws that fail to reflect the gravity of hate crimes; inadequate monitoring and reporting systems; and inadequate statistical systems. The predominant factor, however, may be a straightforward lack of political will to address hate crimes.

These were factors we addressed in a series of reports, and in statements before OSCE conferences in Vienna, Berlin, and Brussels. At the OSCE's Brussels Conference, the Executive Director of Human Rights First, Michael Posner, stood before many of you and listed the names of countries that have yet to enact legislation making racist bias an aggravating factor in crimes; that provide no reliable statistics on hate crimes; and that have no specialized agencies concerned with hate crimes—fundamental tools for the fight against hate crimes.

I will not be naming countries at this time, but I do encourage those who have not done so to pick up a copy of our new report, ***Everyday Fears: A Survey of Violent Hate Crimes in Europe and North America***. The report includes

chapters on each OSCE country and details the way each has met or failed to meet its international commitments.

The report documents the continued alarming increase in antisemitic, anti-immigrant, and anti-Muslim hate crimes from Vancouver to Vladivostok. It also underscores a disturbing lack of response to hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation, gender, and disability.

Now, in taking stock, Human Rights First welcomes ODIHR's progress in taking on the difficult tasks assigned it, and the initial efforts of the three special representatives. We urge participating states to provide the resources required for this work to be sustained and to move forward.

Above all, we feel it imperative that the mandates of the three representatives be extended beyond the period of the current chair in office, with a clear understanding that each be provided the resources and operational space required to fulfill the responsibilities incumbent upon them.

While we feel it important that the three representatives work together to make joint recommendations to the OSCE and participating states on the fight against hate crimes, we also propose they be expressly mandated to produce annual reports concerning their findings and recommendations concerning their specific thematic areas of responsibility.

Human Rights First is pleased to participate in this meeting—as in Berlin and Brussels last year as part of a Leadership Conference on Civil Rights delegation. Yesterday evening, we joined several Europe-based NGOs in discussing a common strategy to help move words into action—to press for specific commitments along the lines of those I outlined above.

As we note in our new *Everyday Fears* report, "we will continue to build a broad coalition of nongovernmental organizations committed to the fight against all forms of discriminatory violence while holding governments to their commitments." As the Leadership Conference declaration makes clear, we join as Jew and Muslim, black, white, and Latino, around a shared understanding; that the failure to address antisemitism and other forms of intolerance carries a steep price for all of us. Thank you.