



United States Mission to the OSCE

Session 13

Tolerance and Non-Discrimination

**Responses to and prevention of hate crimes in the OSCE area;
Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also
focusing on intolerance and discrimination against Christians
and members of other religions;
Combating anti-Semitism;
Combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador David Johnson
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Warsaw, October 4, 2011

Mr./Madam Moderator,

As we observe the tenth anniversary of September 11th and recall subsequent promises of solidarity among nations to combat extremism and intolerance, we remain deeply concerned that bigotry, exemplified by the recent tragedy in Norway, continues to plague the OSCE region. The recent social unrest in London also raises concerns that societal tensions possibly emanating from economic disparities, youth disenfranchisement, and racial and ethnic discrimination could lead to violence.

We therefore continue to support the various OSCE initiatives that address prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict, ranging from the work of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), including its annual hate crimes report and new law enforcement training program, to the work of the Personal Representatives on Tolerance and the High Commissioner on National Minorities.

However, we remain concerned that participating States are not honoring their commitments to building tolerant and inclusive societies. The majority of participating States still do not collect and report sufficient data on hate crimes to ODIHR. Data is essential to forming appropriate and holistic responses to hate crime. The United States is proud of the fact that we disaggregate hate crime data, including on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability. We call on other countries to disaggregate hate crime data, and stand ready to offer our technical expertise to make this recommendation a reality.

Furthermore, recommendations from the numerous tolerance meetings over the past few years, including recent meetings on anti-Semitic discourse and anti-Christian hate crimes, are rarely utilized. Attendance by delegations and civil society at many tolerance meetings has also been poor.

We believe that a greater focus on implementation and concrete projects is necessary. In particular, our efforts might be more productive if we concentrated on holding fewer meetings—while ensuring that the meetings we do agree to hold are 1) more strategically focused and 2) linked to specific action items by participating States. Additionally, future tolerance meetings should be scheduled within the regular human dimension meeting framework (e.g., HDIMs and Supplementary Human Dimension Meetings), as opposed to ad-hoc meetings. We encourage the Chairman, working with the Troika, to reduce the number of ad hoc meetings and to encourage measurable follow-up from previous meetings.

The upcoming meetings on anti-Muslim discrimination and the November Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on “the Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes through Educational and Awareness-Raising” offer opportunities to implement these recommendations. Our delegation specifically requested that the SHDM focus on racism and xenophobia in concert with the International Year for People of African Descent and to address OSCE, European Union, Swiss, and other reports that indicate ‘visible’ minorities experience higher rates of discrimination, including by law enforcement. We look forward to working with the Chairmanship, ODIHR, and other participating States on concrete initiatives for the meeting.

The United States is concerned about increasing levels of anti-Semitism and its insidious entry into mainstream media and public settings in Europe, and we encourage OSCE member states to take steps to address it. The face of modern anti-Semitism has changed. Accordingly we encourage public discussion on the nature of new forms of anti-Semitism – how to recognize it and ways to combat it, though we must remember the past in order to prevent it from happening again. While Holocaust education has been one of the casualties of this trend in Europe, we commend Lithuania for its Holocaust education program, and urge other countries to reinvigorate such efforts.

Since the beginning of humankind, hate has been around, but since then too, good people of all faiths and backgrounds have striven to combat it. Our approach to combating anti-Semitism is to join in partnership with Jews and non-Jews alike in condemning it – government, civil society, international institutions, business leaders, labor unions, and media. Partnering with opinion leaders from government and non-government -- and building bridges among ethnic and religious groups -- is one way to change a culture from fear and negative stereotyping to acceptance and understanding, from narrow mindedness to an embrace of diversity, from hate to tolerance.

We are greatly disturbed by anti-Semitic remarks and by chauvinistic and mean-spirited comments expressed in the context of national debates on ‘identity,’ and ‘secularism,’ and “multi-culturalism.” This rhetoric contributes to biases against Jews, Muslims and others. Against this backdrop of fraying tolerance, some political leaders have led efforts to adopt laws and policies that counter a host of OSCE human rights commitments. Examples include efforts to pass legislation banning religious attire in France, Belgium, and Italy, and the ban on the construction of minarets in Switzerland. Regardless of the nominal intent of many of these initiatives, in practice they can also limit the religious liberties of Christians, Muslims, Jews and others, as in the case of Dutch efforts to ban the ritual slaughter of animals in the Netherlands.

Over the last few days, we have focused frequently on the dismal political situation in Belarus and the failure of the Lukashenko regime to adhere to its OSCE commitments. Regrettably, Belarus must also be cited for its intolerant and discriminatory behavior in which non-traditional religious groups have been fined for hosting “illegal gatherings.”

Anti-Semitic violence in the region linked to activities in the Middle East is a continuing concern. We urge participating States to exercise exceptional vigilance in the protection of Jewish communities in the aftermath of the September Palestinian rallies, and remind participating States of the Berlin Declaration, which states that “international developments or political issues, including those in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, never justify anti-Semitism.”

We urge more efforts that encourage unity, such the 2011 Hours Against Hate campaign to encourage persons from different backgrounds to work together to combat prejudice; Germany’s Nordrhein Westfalen’s (NRW) state parliament’s adoption of the resolution “Islam is part of Germany and NRW;” and, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Resolution “Strengthening Efforts to Combat Racism and Xenophobia and Foster Inclusion.” In light of recent events in the Middle East, we would recommend the OSCE Mediterranean Conference consider holding a session on “The Arab Spring and Tolerance.”

Protecting the rights and promoting the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) into societies remains a top priority for the United States – both at home and abroad. We thank the OSCE countries whose support was pivotal for passage of the first UN resolution on the human rights of LGBT persons in June in Geneva. The resolution will create the first UN report on LGBT issues around the world and lead to continued UN attention to the human rights of LGBT persons. However, we remain concerned about the violent responses to pride marches we have seen in some countries throughout the OSCE region. While there have been improvements in this area in some countries, such as Poland, LGBT people continue to face violence and harassment - or an outright ban, most recently, in Serbia - as they seek to exercise their rights to freedom of assembly.

We are also continuing to work to make the United States more tolerant for LGBT people. We have taken a number of steps to further this goal, including the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. We have also made it easier for transgender persons to apply for passports by removing a rigid surgical requirement for assigning gender markers on U.S. passports. As Secretary Clinton has affirmed “Gay rights are human rights and human rights are gay rights.” We will continue to advocate for expressly including combating of hate crimes and intolerance on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in the work of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

In addition to continuing to monitor and prosecute hate crimes, efforts to address intolerance and discrimination in our own country include President Obama’s *Executive Order - Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce* which requires government agencies to develop strategic plans to address

barriers to equal opportunity. We welcome opportunities to provide more details on these and our other anti-discrimination measures during the remainder of HDIM.

Thank you.