

20 September 2018

## HDIM CONFERENCE OSCE-ODIHR 2018

## STATEMENT

Respected representatives from the OSCE-ODIHR, representatives from national institutions, and colleagues from civil society organizations,

My name is Hajdi Shterjova Simonovikj from the Macedonian Helsinki Committee for human rights, the only organization in my country that since 2013 is registering and reporting on hate crime incidents.

First of all, I want to thank you to OSCE-ODIHR for invitation and possibility to be part of this conference, and to Mission of OSCE in Skopje for continuous support in our efforts to tackle hate crimes and intolerance.

In this 5 and a half years we've produce 5 annual reports which show that actually we are very intolerant society, that instead of using diversity to grow and become better, we are abusing it for mutual hatred and intolerance.

In 2017 Helsinki Committee has identified and registered 70 hate crime incidents, and most of them are motivated by the ethnic or political affiliation of the victim, or the perpetrator. Even more worrying is the fact that in most of these acts minors and young people are involved.

Many of these incidents end with the qualification as misdemeanor instead as a criminal offence, which lead to demotivation and distrust in the system. For example, in the past 3 years there is not a single incident registered on the sexual orientation which doesn't mean that suddenly our society become more tolerant towards LGBTI community. On the contrary, beside of the positive political will of the new government, several hate crime incidents reported to the police and Public Prosecutor office since 2013-2014, remained un-investigated and without conviction.

We commend the government's commitment for changes in the Criminal code towards incrimination and appropriate qualification of hate crimes.

But still: there is a lot more to do, and government and criminal justice institutions must:

1. Ensure prompt and effective investigation and prosecution of hate crimes;
2. Take appropriate measures to facilitate the reporting of hate crimes by victims, including measures to build trust in the police and other state institutions;
3. Collect and publish comprehensive and comparable data on hate crimes;
4. Ensure that victims of hate crime are supported and protected;
5. Conduct trainings for relevant practitioners coming into contact with victims of hate crime; and
6. Enhance preventative measures, *inter alia* by taking steps to educate the public about the values of cultural diversity and inclusion.