

Statement by Human Rights First
Working Session 7: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I
[Roma and Sinti; National Minorities;
Preventing aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism]
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Hate crime is one of the most destructive manifestations of aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism. Poor police responses, inadequate investigations and prosecutions of individual incidents, and limited application of appropriate aggravating circumstances statues in the sentencing of offenders lead to a climate of impunity for all but the most serious violence that perpetuates aggressive manifestations of racism and nationalism.

In many countries, among the perpetrators of racist and other bias-motivated violent acts are those who belong to groups that adhere to ultranationalist and extreme right-wing ideologies. These perpetrators are drawn typically from ordinary citizens who are receptive to a pervasive message of supremacy, hatred and fear of those who do not fit a particular ideal. Across the OSCE region, tens of thousands of mostly young people have been mobilized in a loosely organized movement of “skinheads” united by aggressive nationalist ideology.

Hate crimes victimize a wide range of communities across Europe and North America, and Roma and Sinti are particularly vulnerable to bias-motivated attacks and other forms of discrimination and intolerance. Threatened communities are often distinguished by their ethnic or national origin, religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Prevention of aggressive nationalism and racism requires comprehensive policies, directed at both addressing the urgent need to curtail the rise of bias-motivated violence and instituting programs that promote a culture of respect for human rights throughout society. Yet most governments have fallen far short in their efforts to curtail the rise of hate crime violence, xenophobia, and intolerance.

Human Rights First recommends that participating States work to implement OSCE commitments on combating hate crime and make efforts to:

- Send clear signals to police and prosecutors about the importance of combating aggressive nationalism and racism, and project a categorical response to the perpetrators of this violence,

ensuring that those responsible for hate crimes are held accountable under the law, and that the record of accountability is well documented and publicized.

- Conduct outreach and education efforts to communities and civil society groups to reduce fear and assist victims, advance police-community relations, encourage improved reporting of hate crimes to the police and improve the quality of data collection by law enforcement bodies.
- Hold public figures, government appointees, and local government leaders politically accountable for bigoted words based on aggressive nationalism, racism and chauvinism that create a climate of fear and intimidation for minorities.