



Government Offices  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs  
Sweden

**Statement by Sweden: session 4 at the OSCE High Level  
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Sweden strives to be an open and inclusive society, a country where people with roots in various parts of the world and of different religions can live side by side. Crimes of a racist, xenophobic or homophobic nature run contrary to our fundamental values. The fight against all forms of discrimination, including multiple discrimination, is one of the key human rights objectives of the Swedish Government.

The new Discrimination act, which entered into force last year, includes protection against seven grounds of discrimination: ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion or other belief, disability, age and transgender identity or expression.

According to Swedish criminal law courts, when assessing penalties, shall deem as an aggravating circumstance if the motive for the crime was to aggrieve a person or a group of people on the basis of race, colour, national or ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or other similar circumstances.

Hate crimes, including hate speech, are given high priority by justice system agencies. Every prosecutor's office and every police district have special officials dealing with hate crimes.

The Swedish police and Prosecution authority provide training in combating and prosecuting hate crimes, for example a manual has been developed to guide prosecutors and crime investigators.

Moreover, Sweden annually collects and disseminates disaggregated statistics on the prevalence of hate crimes in order to improve the elaboration of national strategies to combat hate crimes.

The fight against prejudice and xenophobia cannot be successful if left solely to state agencies. It must be a task for society as a whole. This is why a comprehensive approach has been taken to tackle this, including by providing state funding to NGOs.

In Sweden, freedom of expression and freedom of the press, as well as freedom of religion are enshrined in our Constitution. Censorship of written media has been prohibited since 1949. Free and independent media is a necessary precondition for people's participation in public and political life. It is our experience that abuse, wrongdoing and intolerance typically fester in areas less exposed to scrutiny and free debate.

There is a strong legislative framework in place today. The Swedish Freedom of the Press Act, a constitutional law dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, grants everyone the right to express and receive written or oral opinions or images without government interference. It also regulates whether and in which cases interventions against the contents of publications in the press may take place. One such case is incitement to racial hatred. The law prohibits statements that threaten or disparage an ethnic group with reference for example to their beliefs, or national or ethnic origin. An individual who takes offence at a publication in printed media can file a complaint with the Chancellor of Justice, who acts as sole prosecutor and decides on whether to institute inquiries. Individuals can also make a complaint

to the Press Ombudsman, or the Swedish Press Council. Both form part of a self-disciplinary ethical system of the Swedish press.

I would like to conclude by expressing Sweden's appreciation to the OSCE institutions and field operations for their valuable work in assisting us – the participating States – improve our record in fulfilling our responsibility to counter all forms of discrimination and intolerance, including hate crimes, whilst ensuring respect for human rights. In this context, we urge all participating States to implement their OSCE commitments, including by collecting and providing the ODIHR with information on hate crimes.