



Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

Declaration by the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights Conference on Antisemitism

Sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
Berlin, Germany
April 28 – 29, 2004

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights is the oldest, largest, and most diverse civil and human rights coalition in the United States. Founded in 1950, LCCR consists of more than 185 national organizations, representing persons of color, women, children, labor unions, individuals with disabilities, older Americans, major religious groups, gays and lesbians and civil liberties and human rights groups. Together, over 50 million Americans belong to organizations that comprise LCCR.

Over the years, LCCR has been at the forefront of efforts to combat racism and discrimination in all its forms, including the fight against antisemitism. American communities have learned the hard way that failure to address bias and bias motivated crimes can cause an isolated incident to fester and result in widespread tension. Hate crimes have a special emotional and physical impact that extends beyond the original victim. They intimidate others in the victim's community, causing them to feel isolated, vulnerable, and unprotected by the law. By making members of a specific group fearful, angry and suspicious, these acts can polarize communities and damage the very fabric of our society.

In recent years, Jews and Jewish institutions have been the targets of increased antisemitic violence. Incidents like synagogue and school arsons, physical and verbal abuse of Jews in the street, and cemetery desecrations have been on the rise across the OSCE region. New manifestations of anti-Semitism have emerged in many areas of society – in political, religious, and civic life. These incidents sometimes take the form of singling out Jews, as individuals or as a people, in exaggerated and unjust ways. Criticism of the practices and policies of any state is the right and duty of responsible leaders. But the demonization of Jews individually or collectively, including in connection with criticism of Israel or Zionism (Jewish nationalism), is anti-Semitism and a form of racism.

LCCR, as a defender of human rights, views these incidents as serious human rights violations, and calls upon the OSCE as an institution and its Participating States to undertake a program of action to combat this disturbing phenomenon.

As the OSCE moves forward to implement the Maastricht Decision urging states to gather hate crime data in cooperation with institutions such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the European Union Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), NGOs have a critical role to play in working with law enforcement authorities and civic leaders to ensure effective

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reporting and enforcement and to raise the necessary awareness to promote hate crime reporting by victims.

We commit ourselves to intensify efforts to combat anti-Semitism and to promote and strengthen tolerance and non-discrimination in the civil society community.

We commit to working with NGO partners to learn from each others' experience and to share best practices in the fight against anti-Semitism.

We urge the OSCE and its participating states to implement a program of action to ensure that Jews may fully enjoy their human rights on an equal basis with all peoples, in security and dignity.

We strongly urge states to take the following actions to address anti-Semitism and hate violence:

I. Legislative and Institutional Mechanisms and Government Action, including Law Enforcement

1. Reaffirm OSCE commitments to take effective measures to combat anti-Semitism.
2. Authorize OSCE to monitor incidents of anti-Semitism and other hate crimes, publicly report findings, and encourage participating states to institute hate crime data collection mechanisms where none exist.

Hate crime data collection efforts will increase public awareness of the problem – and spark improvements in the response of the criminal justice system to hate violence. Studies in the United States have demonstrated that victims are more likely to report a hate crime if they know a special reporting system is in place.

3. Task OSCE with monitoring and reporting about the nature of anti-Semitism to help states identify, report, and respond to anti-Semitic incidents accurately.
4. Urge OSCE's law enforcement arm to craft a training model to ensure law enforcement officials can recognize anti-Semitic and other hate crimes and develop transparent procedures for recording and responding to these incidents.

Law enforcement officials can advance police-community relations by demonstrating a commitment to be both tough on hate crime perpetrators and sensitive to the special needs of hate crime victims. As stated in the International Association of Chiefs of Police's National Policy Center's Concepts and Issues Paper on Hate Crime (May, 2000): "Swift and effective response to hate crimes helps to generate the degree of trust and goodwill between the community and its law enforcement agency that has long-term benefits for all concerned."

5. Ensure that each nation's national legal systems provide effective protection against all forms of anti-Semitism in conformity with international and regional antidiscrimination and human rights standards. Undertake measures to ensure effective implementation of legislation prohibiting discrimination and incitement to hatred and that action is taken against institutions and individuals responsible for violating these norms.

While bigotry cannot be outlawed, hate crime penalty enhancement statutes demonstrate an important commitment to confront criminal activity motivated by prejudice. The intent of penalty-enhancement hate crime laws is not only to reassure targeted groups by imposing serious punishment on hate crime perpetrators, but also to deter these crimes by demonstrating that they will be dealt with in a serious manner. Under these laws, no one is punished merely for bigoted thoughts, ideology, or speech. But when prejudice prompts an individual to act on these beliefs and engage in criminal conduct, a prosecutor may seek a more severe sentence, but must prove that the victim was intentionally selected because of his/her personal characteristics.

6. Law enforcement anti-bias training.

Police officials have come to appreciate the law enforcement and community benefits of tracking hate crime and responding to it in a priority fashion. By compiling statistics and charting the geographic distribution of these crimes, police officials may be in a position to discern patterns and anticipate an increase in racial tensions in a given jurisdiction. OSCE states should provide incentives for law enforcement training to address anti-Semitism and hate violence. As efforts to train law enforcement officials continue and expand, officials will learn more about the perpetrators of these especially hurtful crimes – and how to prevent them.

II. The Role of Government and Civil Society in Promoting Tolerance

1. Condemn unequivocally, at the highest levels, all manifestations of anti-Semitism, and make clear that acts of anti-Semitic hatred and intolerance are unacceptable and will be severely punished.

Government leaders should seek opportunities to speak out against bigotry, intolerance, and prejudice in their society. It is hard to overstate the importance of outspoken leadership in opposition to all forms of bigotry. Civic leaders set the tone for national discourse and have an essential role in shaping attitudes. Politicians and civic leaders should never engage in divisive appeals based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.

2. Ensure swift and thorough investigations into incidents of anti-Semitic violence and vandalism, as well as acts of discrimination – making sure that those found responsible are brought to justice.

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3. Urge Parliaments to form parliamentary groups to help OSCE commitments translate into national action plans and craft legislation where necessary.
4. Urge OSCE states to condemn the use of anti-Semitic themes by major political parties.

III. The Role of Education

Develop and institute appropriate state anti-bias education programs designed to make schools a safer environment.

There is growing awareness of the need to complement tough laws and more vigorous law enforcement – which can deter and redress violence motivated by bigotry – with education, training, and diversion initiatives designed to reduce bias-motivated violence. In the United States, the American Psychological Association (APA), in a landmark 1993 report, documented the role of prejudice and discrimination in fostering social conflict that can lead to violence. Educational resources are effective tools to alter attitudes and behaviors – which in turn can prevent and reduce acts of hatred and discrimination. The APA report asserted that education programs that reduce prejudice and hostility are integral components of plans to address youth violence. The report concluded that conflict resolution and prejudice reduction programs can provide needed information and skills to prevent youth violence.

OSCE states can play a central role in funding program development in this area and promoting awareness of best practices, programs, and initiatives that work.

IV. Information and Awareness Raising: The Role of Media in Conveying and Countering Prejudice.

Encourage media to address anti-Semitism and subjects relating to contemporary Jewish issues objectively, responsibly, and sensitively.

* This statement has not been endorsed by all LCCR member organizations.

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