



**UNHCR Contribution to the
OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 14: “Hate Crime”**

Warsaw, 25 September 2019

Distinguished Chairperson,
Dear Participants,

“Racism, hate speech, discrimination and public lies were the foundations on which the Nazis carried out the gravest crime in the history of humanity. We witness them today, everyday. Let us remain vigilant.”
Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees¹

What often begins as subtle expressions of dislike and intolerance towards the “Other” can gradually develop into discrimination, hatred, verbal and physical abuse and, ultimately, hate crimes. The particular vulnerability of asylum-seekers and refugees and other displaced persons to racist and xenophobic attitudes and acts is a global phenomenon that needs to be addressed with renewed efforts, also in the OSCE area. Mandated with the protection of displaced persons, UNHCR is deeply concerned about false portrayal, and believes that its people of concern are increasingly the target of negative stereotyping, stigmatization, as well as hate crimes and incidents.

We would like to recall that racial discrimination and related intolerance are common causes of flight and can threaten the protection of asylum-seekers and refugees at subsequent stages of the displacement cycle. This can be manifested through restricted access to asylum systems or negatively affect the quality of asylum. Asylum-seekers and refugees may be denied equal access to public services and become targets of racially motivated acts. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin, sometimes in combination with discrimination on other grounds, is also a recurring reason for the denial or deprivation of nationality and is therefore a cause of statelessness.

States are ultimately responsible for creating an environment in which all human beings can equally exercise their rights. Hate crimes, and more specifically hate speech, stands as an important barrier to the inclusion of all citizens within a society. UNHCR for years has called for deepening cooperation among States, international organizations and civil society within and across communities to foster tolerance and respect of race, religion, and ethnicity.

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/UNHCR/photos/racism-hate-speech-discrimination-and-public-lies-were-the-foundations-on-which-/10158447374613438/>



UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

For many years, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and UNHCR have cooperated in activities aiming at combatting racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in the OSCE region. UNHCR staff has benefited for years from the annual ODIHR hate crime workshops which empowers field offices to monitor and collect data on hate crimes against displaced persons. Every year, UNHCR compiles data for inclusion in the ODIHR annual hate crime report, which is then used to implement action plans to diminish hate crime in the entire region.

Effective strategies need to be informed by an analysis of the underlying reasons for racist and xenophobic tendencies and intolerance, including fears of the unknown, concerns related to the preservation of national cohesion and identities, and other factors such as increased migratory flows, economic downturn, rising unemployment and urbanization which may fuel such sentiments. Creative approaches are needed to “roll back xenophobia” and UNHCR is ready to assist States, the OSCE and other partners to design and implement programs that promote tolerance towards, and respect for, foreigners, including refugees. Now more than ever we should renew all our efforts to ensure that the protection of human beings remains life-saving, non-political, and fundamentally humanitarian.

Thank you for your attention!

*UNHCR Liaison Office to the OSCE and Vienna-based UN Agencies
Vienna, September 2019*