



Statement by Human Rights First

Plenary session 2: Combating Antisemitism

OSCE Conference on Tolerance and Nondiscrimination

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Human Rights First has been working since 2002 to monitor violence motivated by antisemitism and to press for stronger government action to combat it.

We have long maintained that antisemitic violence, as well as other forms of hate crime, must be viewed and responded to as a serious violation of human rights and that governments can and must do more to confront such abuses. Likewise, we believe it is important that these violations be challenged—not just by victims' groups or those who represent communities of targeted individuals—but by all those who seek to advance universal rights and freedoms. Although some progress has been made in the last decade to draw greater attention to the issue, high levels of antisemitic violence persist, and the political will to reverse the trend remains lacking in much of the OSCE region.

Although the number of incidents has fluctuated from year-to-year and from country-to-country throughout this past decade, there have been familiar elements to the violence documented throughout North America, Europe, and the former Soviet Union: synagogues, community centers, and Jewish homes and businesses have been targeted in arson attacks and subjected to widespread vandalism; and ordinary people have been harassed, beaten, stabbed, or shot because they were Jewish.

The OSCE has been a leader in international efforts to combat antisemitism, and OSCE states have made a wide range of commitments to combat antisemitic and other forms of hate crimes. Yet, the record of implementation of these commitments remains dismal and most states have fallen short in implementing one of the baseline commitments—to maintain reliable and accurate data on all forms of hate crime. In fact, only eight governments submitted data on antisemitic hate crime to the ODIHR for its 2008 Hate Crime report.

Human Rights First supports the civil society recommendations voiced at the beginning of this session and calls on states in particular to implement their commitments to monitor, investigate, prosecute, and report publicly on state responses to antisemitic and other hate crimes.