

OSCE Review Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination
Warsaw 6th October 2010

Working Session 8

Intervention by the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has made great progress in recent years, in its efforts to combat and prevent crimes based on intolerance and discrimination.

ODIHR has noted in successive reports that the UK is one of very few states that fully meets its obligations to record and publish data on hate crime. All police forces and our prosecution service record data on hate crimes, using a common definition of hate crime which includes crimes fueled by a hostility based on Disability, Race, Religion, Sexual Orientation and Transgender. This data is becoming more robust and will provide a reliable picture of the extent of hate crime in our country. Our new government has reiterated its commitment to challenge hate crime in seeking its goal of providing 'Freedom, Fairness and Responsibility' The Coalition's Programme for Government has a specific objective of reducing the under-reporting of hate crime.

A crucial part of our achievement is this provision of transparent and accurate hate crime data. Increased reporting is the best indicator of victim confidence in a State's response. We hope that this year's hate crime report from ODIHR shows an improvement in this respect across the the OSCE region. It is perhaps counter-intuitive that governments would want to see a rise in reported crime but we know that many hate crimes go un-reported or are not recognised by authorities. This is why we also measure hate crime through partnerships with Civil Society and through the extensive British Crime Survey. The latter importantly provides an understanding of not only reported crime but an estimate of actual victimisation.

Work is underway to include the hate crime data in our National Statistics and in the interim, disaggregated data is being provided by a national police body, the Association of Chief Police Officers.

There are different elements to some hate crimes that mean our approach may be different but the right to protection from bigoted abuse is a universal one that we all share.

Revised guidelines for all police forces are about to be published. Guidelines for prosecutors have already been published, and in addition, the judiciary seeks to update its members through training provided by the Judicial Studies Board and by revisions to the Judges Bench-book, their sentencing guidance book

The UK has a range of legislative protection from discrimination, from civil equalities provisions to enhanced sentencing legislation for crimes motivated by bias. They support our fundamental beliefs that we should all share the same protection from the law and that a transparent approach to hate crime builds the confidence of communities who are targeted for abuse.

Oversight mechanisms, which involve standing committees representing the criminal justice agencies, and civil society agencies and public scrutiny procedures, ensure that the police adhere to the UK's international and national undertakings, and promote best practice.

Successive reports by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance have noted the progress made by the UK in these respects.

The UK recognises the relationship between incitement online and violence on the streets. We have had some limited success in bringing to justice those who incite violent hatred using the Internet. But there is still much work to do. We need to work with all stakeholders to promote clear lines that balance a person's right to freely express their views, even when offensive, with the right to live free from bigoted violence.

We welcome Ministerial Council Decision 9/09 which begins the challenging but vital task of gaining an understanding of the link to violence and promoting cooperation member states and with key stakeholders such as the Internet Industry and Civil Society.

No state can reduce the harm caused by internationally organised violence or internet based incitement unilaterally. In the OSCE and with the support of ODIHR we have a unique opportunity to work to reduce these corrosive activities in ways that respect States' individual legislative frameworks. To ignore this opportunity will increase the harm in our communities. Mr Moderator - We must not allow that to happen.