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Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Joint written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 August 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The Rising Trend of Islamophobia Demands a Focused Attention

Islamophobia has been on the rise across the world countries, including the United States, Canada, Europe and the South America. It is reflected in the increasing number of hate crimes, harassment against Muslims, attacks to their properties or holy sites. Also, it is reflected in hate speech targeting Muslims especially by political figures and the discriminatory policies against people of Islam faith. In the United States, the policies of the new administration – including revocation of Muslims 60,000 visas¹ - as well as its political rhetoric targeting Muslims is proven to have caused an increase in the number of xenophobic attacks. The results of a recent study released by California State University-San Bernardino's Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism indicate that political rhetoric can trigger hate crimes. The study shows that Trump's anti-Muslim remarks could have contributed to a backlash against American Muslims. Using the official data of twenty US states and drawing on numerous studies conducted on the feeling of hatred toward Muslims, the study suggests the widespread Islamophobia across the country². The most recent case of Islamophobic attack was reported in Minnesota, on August, 5th 2017, which was resulted by lack of police reply to the threats made prior to the attack.

In Canada, there has been a 253% increase in hate crimes against Muslims in 2017. On 30th, January 2017, a heinous attack on a Qebeck Mosque killed 6 innocent fathers and injured 19 other people. The incident that took place two days after Donald Trump's Muslim ban over the American borders is believed to be rooted in Xenophobic, Islamophobic feelings. Canada's parliament's decision, on March 2017, for passing a non-binding motion condemning Islamophobia and tasking the government to conduct studies on ways of addressing racism and discrimination is noted but has proven not to be effective enough to prevent the incidents.

Hate speech and xenophobic expressions have been frequently referred to as sources of serious concern by the UN experts, specially the UN Special Rapporteur on "Minority Rights"³, the Special Rapporteur on "Freedom of Religion and Belief"⁴, Special Rapporteur on "Contemporary Forms of Racism"⁵, UN Special Rapporteur on "Human Rights of Migrants"⁶ and Special Rapporteur on "Freedom of Opinion and Expression"⁷. The experts consider expression of hate as a major root cause of various forms of violence and crimes. Moreover, the UN has been striving toward combatting xenophobic language in the media and fostering inclusive integration of minorities in societies. Ban Ki Moon, the ex UN Secretary General, has warned that negative remarks against migrants are reaching levels of frequency and public acceptance⁸.

1 . <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/04/donald-trump-slams-so-called-judge-blocked-ban-vows-overturn/>

2 . <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3110202-SPECIAL-STATUS-REPORT-v5-9-16-16.html>

3 . www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/.../A_HRC_28_64_ENG.doc;
www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/.../A_HRC_28_64_Add_1_en.doc

4 . www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/.../A_HRC_28_66_ENG.doc

5 . <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55736#.WISVSHGUeSw>

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gashc4182.doc.htm>

6 . <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/nov/18/australias-immigration-policies-have-promoted-xenophobia-un-expert>

7 . <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/501/25/PDF/N1250125.pdf?OpenElement>

8 . http://www.un.org/pga/70/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2015/08/21-April_Refugees-and-Migrants-21-April-2016.pdf

Also, in a high-level event on combating anti-Muslim discrimination, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres strongly criticized expressions of Islamophobia, encouraging the world to follow “the principles of inclusion, tolerance and mutual understanding to recognize the value of diversity.”⁹

In addition, the recent report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance points out the findings of a “fact-finding meeting: Hate Motivated Incidents Targeting Migrants, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in the OSCE Region”, warning that there are negative stereotypes against Muslims in some countries of Eastern Europe and in South America hate crimes against Muslims increase following each terrorist attack¹⁰.

Considering the fact that, despite the current attempt to fight hate crimes, Islamophobia has been on the rise round the world, Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) calls on the Human Rights Council to mandate the Advisory Committee to study the roots causes of Islamophobia making recommendations on preventive measures to effectively reduce islamophobic incidents on the ground.

Recognizing the UN principles, ODVV echoes the UN officials’ remarks against xenophobic expressions that violate international human rights law¹¹.

ODVV also calls on the Human Rights Council to introduce a resolution to establish a monitoring mechanism such as an Independent Expert to assess the present situation of Islamophobia, providing the council with information on the ongoing challenges as well as the best practices to counter the rising trend.

We call on the Special Procedures to create a database and record all cases of Islamophobia, offering a reliable reference for assessment of the current situation.

We call on all member states to draft a resolution to establish a mandate for an independent expert on Islamophobia.

9 . <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55983#.WJ6rQnGUeSx>

10 . http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/35/41

11 . <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-muslim-travel-ban-illegal-un-rights-chief-a7552991.html>