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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization 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.

[21 August 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



A Look at a Number of Human Rights Concerns in the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Canada

Introduction

The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) would like to draw the Council's attention towards grave human rights violations in the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Canada. Over the last years, the situation of refugees and racial discrimination have been among significant human rights concerns in these countries. With the hope of the improvement of conditions, we would like to highlight some cases of these violations.

1) Asylum-seekers and Refugees

A) The United States of America

For the three successive decades, the United States of America has tried to reduce illegal immigration into the country through "Prevention Through Deterrence" policy. It can be said that the United States of America border with Mexico is one of the deadliest land routes for migrants in the world, where in 2021 at least 728 people lost their lives. This figure has reached 493 in the first six months of 2022.(1) That is deterrence has not stopped the migration trend, but has caused death for thousands of migrants. The recent United States of America's Supreme Court's decision regarding detained migrants not being entitled to a bond hearing, leading to continued imprisonment of thousands of migrants whose case files are still open, is another sign of the government policy failures and the dire human rights situation of refugees in the country. From June 2022, more than 24,500 individuals were detained in the United States of America immigrant detention centres. (2)

Also discriminatory treatment of Afghan refugees can be highlighted following the return of the Taliban, approximately 46,000 requests have been made for humanitarian visas to the country's immigration institutions, 90 percent of which have been rejected. In the first six months of 2021 from almost 5000 applications, only 297 were approved and 4,267 were rejected.(3)

B) The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

According to new findings, at least 107 asylum-seekers housed in centres under the supervision of the Home Office – which include Iranians – have died in the period from April 2016 to May 2022.(4) Another of Britain's failure regarding asylum-seekers is seen in their transfer to Rwanda plan, which drew the reaction of Members of Parliament and criticism of UNHCR. This programme, increases the dangers of the deportation of refugees and asylum-seekers back to their country of origin. In a few-day pilot programme, following failure to send refugees to Rwanda, the Home Office has put electronic tags on some asylum-seekers. Right from the outset 40 human rights organizations opposed the programme and they deem it as the criminalization of asylum-seeking.

The lengthening of the processing of asylum-seekers cases in the country is another source of concern. Delays in processing asylum-seeker files have quadrupled since March 2019 and during the period 18,734 individuals were waiting over six months for their cases to be heard, while the Home Office announced the total number of individuals waiting for their cases to be heard 109,735. (5)

Unfortunately, the conditions of migrant workers in the country is also dire and they are facing unacceptable conditions such as racist exploitations and low living standards, living in housings that lack basic facilities.

C) Canada

The Border Services Agency of Canada has imprisoned hundreds of migrants in British Columbia provincial prisons that include extra security prisons. Communications between these prisons and the outside world are cut or reached the minimum level possible, while they have been in incarceration for months and years consecutively .(6)

2) Racial Discrimination**A) The United States of America**

Centuries of discrimination and economic deprivation in the United States of America has deepened a racial chasm regarding enjoyment of human rights in the country.

A poll just a week after the shootings in Buffalo NY, proved half of white Americans or the majority to have supremacist beliefs and three-quarters of African Americans to be concerned about physical violence to themselves or their family members, based on race(7). Also, violence, racism and Islamophobia against Asians have increased since the mass killings in Atlanta in 2021, where eight people were killed, six of which were Asian-American women(8) . In 2021, about a third of Asian Americans have said that they have changed their daily routine due to concerns over the threat of racial attacks and hate crimes(9) .

Discrimination against Muslims in the United States of America has increased by six percent and Islamophobia is seen as an institutionalised and deep phenomenon in the country. In 2021, 6750 complaints on wide-ranging racist issues related to migration, travel discriminations, exploitation by law enforcement and the government, hate spreading and criminal incidents, guardianship rights at school and , freedom of expression related incidents have been recorded(10).

B) The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

In the first six months of 2010 and 11 Royal Air Force special forces unlawfully killed 54 Afghan civilians in Helmand province, while the British military has covered these up and claimed that the country's soldiers have observed necessary guidelines and standards(11) . These horrific actions indicate a concerning level of British troops impunity. Also the authorities covering up these acts is extremely immoral and shows the country's lack of interest to conduct independent investigations regarding these accusations. We believe that the British government is obliged to begin urgent investigation of all accusations made against its special forces and to hold them to account. British government's failure to do this must be met with International Criminal Court beginning a prosecution process.

Another important matter regarding violation of human rights in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is Muslim citizens of the country experiencing Islamophobia in their workplaces. According to a survey conducted at the request of the Islamophobia and Discrimination against Muslims in Europe Watchdog Organization, seven out of ten British Muslims have experienced Islamophobia in their workplace. According to this survey, approximately 69 percent of working Muslims in Britain have experienced some form of Islamophobia at work(12). Compared to other Muslims, black Muslims have experienced higher levels of Islamophobia. We believe that if the government intends to act on its commitments for creating an equal society, it must change its approach towards blacks, Asians and ethnic minorities.

C) Canada

Members of the Canadian Black Society have warned about the lack of security and vulnerability in the country towards hate crimes. For example, the possibility of black people being stopped by police is twice as much as other people and the chances of use of police using force against them is 1.6 times higher.

According to statistical reports, in Canada, hate crimes against black citizens has increased by 96 percent following the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country. The number of supremacists in the Canadian army has also increased and Canadian commanders have not

done enough to eradicate these beliefs and ideologies. It is urgent that Canadian leaders take further action towards addressing hate crimes and extremist right wing groups violence.

Recommendations:

ODVV recommends creation of safe and legal routes for asylum-seekers in order to reduce the exposure of the vulnerable groups to threats, exploitation and abuse.

ODVV calls upon the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants to review the real situation of migrants and asylum seekers in western countries and call on these countries to put an end to their cruel and inhuman policies and remain committed to the Refugee Convention (1951).

ODVV expresses concern towards hate spreading, racial discrimination and xenophobia in western countries and strongly calls upon them to eradicate Islamophobia, and investigate racism and combat discrimination against Muslims.

ODVV stresses on the necessity to teach children in schools on how to fight against systematic racism and call on States to adopt strong laws and policies to combat racism and xenophobia.

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