

Talking Points Gert Weisskirchen

**OSCE CHAIRMANSHIP CONFERENCE ON INTOLERANCE AND
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIMS**

9 – 10 October 2007

The fight against Antisemitism and the discrimination faced by Muslims

- Distinct focus on the various forms of intolerances (antisemitism, racism and discrimination faced by Muslims, Christians and members of other religions) must be maintained. No group of victims of intolerance, hatred and discrimination is being served by lumping together the various phenomena.
- This distinctiveness would be epitomized by continuation of the mandates of the three personal representatives as well as through distinct conferences devoted to each problem while of course commonalities in dealing with them (e.g. education, data collection, hate crime policing) should be highlighted.
- Comparisons between discrimination faced by Muslims with the persecution suffered by the Jews under the Nazis are flawed and unacceptable. They denigrate one group of victims and do not help to understand and tackle the specifics of the problems faced by the other.
- Discrimination faced by Muslims or any other group can never be an excuse or reason for discriminating against another group. There is no justification for any sort of hatred. Events in the Middle East or elsewhere never justify antisemitism or discrimination of any particular group of people for that matter. Likewise, belonging oneself to one group of victims of discrimination, hatred and intolerance can never be a justification for victimizing members of another group.
- I would avoid the term “Islamophobia” due to its controversial and strongly debatable terminological genesis and sometimes problematic use, and instead refer to the phenomenon in question as “discrimination against Muslims” or “discrimination faced by Muslims”, which would also be more in line with both this conference’s title and the title of the mandate of my respected colleague Ambassador Ömür Orhun.
- The term “antisemitism” - in its historic genesis and unique forms of expression - means hatred of Jews and Jews only. Its inventor, the self-professed German antisemite Wilhelm Marr left no doubt about

this. Any sort of deliberate terminological confusion such as the claim that antisemitism means hatred of all people of the “Semite” family of languages is absurd and aims to blur the specific history of persecution and extermination of Jews.

- While intercultural and interreligious dialogue remains an important tool of communication, mutual learning and sharing of information, it is no panacea to antisemitism or for that matter any other form of group-related hatred. Dialogues that call one group’s inalienable right to national self-determination into question do not serve the purpose of mutual understanding and tolerance. At its core this is not a religious debate.
- There were undeniable achievements in the Arab-Muslim world’s integration of its Jewish minority, despite historical inaccuracies in the legend of peace and harmony that blends out examples of persecution and discrimination. The situation of Jews and Muslims under the Caliphate, reflecting the situation of the treatment of a minority by a majority, should not be superimposed on the current situation of Jews and Muslims living in Europe, where both are minorities and where members of one group have in repeated incidents victimized the other. The spread of antisemitism in the Arab-Muslim world, which is transported to Arab-Muslim migrants in Europe, is also an unfortunate phenomenon of more recent times.

Following I will focus on the areay of data collection and education

Data Collection

The ODIHR Working Definition of Hate Crimes says:

Part A) Any criminal offence, including offences against persons or property, where the victim, premises or target of the offence are selected because of their real or perceived connection, attachment, affiliation, support or membership with a group as defined in part B

Part B) A group may be based upon their real or perceived race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or other similar factor.

OSCE Participating States have committed to:

- Combat hate crimes, including on the internet

- Collect reliable information and statistics on hate crime, including on anti-Semitic crimes and make this information available to the public
 - Submit existing legislation, statistics and reliable information on hate crime to the ODIHR
 - Strengthen efforts to provide public officials, and in particular law enforcement officers with appropriate training on responding to and preventing hate crimes
 - Consider nominating national points of contact on hate crimes and examine the possibility of establishing within countries appropriate bodies to promote tolerance and combat racism
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- Without data collection there is a data deficit which makes it difficult to combat such crimes and to assess on what exactly policies dealing with issues of tolerance and non-discrimination should focus.
 - Despite repeated commitments requiring OSCE participating states to improve their collection of hate-crime statistics and information, in many states there is a lack of publicly available data that is comprehensive in scope and that includes a detailed overview of crimes committed on different bias grounds.
 - I want to refer to the NGO recommendations from the Tolerance Implementation meeting „Addressing the Hate Crime Data Deficit“ which took place from 9 - 10 November 2006 in Vienna.
 - Following I repeat some important recommendations. The NGOs addressed to the participating states:
 - We remind participating States of their commitment to provide hate crime statistics on a regular basis and to respond to violent manifestations of intolerance;
 - We stress the need for data to be publicized in a comprehensive way and on a regular basis
 - We recommend that all grounds of discrimination including age, disability, gender, social status, political and religious belief and sexual orientation should be included in data on hate crimes;
 - We recommend that specialized bodies acknowledge the information and data provided by civil society representatives and establish consultation mechanisms with civil society when reporting;

- Hate crime statistics are necessary in order to determine which groups are increasingly vulnerable, and collection and analysis of such statistics enable governments to develop policy responses and allocate necessary resources in order to respond effectively to hate crimes and incidents.

Education

- The Cordoba Declaration from 2005 and a number of commitments from OSCE participating states identified education „as a means for preventing and responding to all forms of intolerance and discrimination, as well as for promoting integration and respecting diversity“.
- Since adopting these commitments, several OSCE states have undertaken specific measures to change prejudicial and racist attitudes among young people, to intensify their efforts to promote commemoration of the Holocaust, and to develop educational programmes and tools to combat Antisemitism.

Teaching Material on Jewish History and Antisemitism

- Country-specific teaching material on historical and contemporary Antisemitism were developed in co-operation of the ODIHR, the Anne Frank House and national experts from each of the states. Specific adaptations, based on the historical and current situation in each country, have been developed and piloted.
- The materials come in three parts:
 - Part 1: History of Antisemitism
 - Part 2: Contemporary forms of Antisemitism
 - Part 3: Relation of Antisemitism and other forms of discrimination
- Lessons taught using these materials will provide insights into Antisemitism as a historical phenomenon and also reveal links between past and present forms of Antisemitism. The materials also deal with the workings of prejudice in general, showing students the impact that bias can have both on individuals and on whole societies.
- Currently materials are available for Germany, the Netherlands, Ukraine, Lithuania, Croatia, Denmark and Poland, materials are being developed for the Russian Federation, Spain and Slovakia.

Preparing Holocaust Memorial Days

- Another tool from the ODIHR is a document which compiles best practices from 12 OSCE participating states and suggestions for educators how to prepare a Holocaust Memorial Day.
- The materials were developed in co-operation with Yad Vashem, they are available in 13 languages: Croatian, Dutch, English, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, and Spanish.
- The majority of the OSCE participating states commemorates the victims of the Holocaust.
- Education is a means of not only combating Antisemitism but also a preventive measure. The topic can be linked to the area of tolerance and non-discrimination in general and is thus conducive to creating and fostering a climate of tolerance and understanding among and within communities.