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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

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 January 2019]

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



The United States of America and rise of Islamophobia

Approximately six decades have passed since the adoption of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1963), which stresses on important points such as the condemnation of racial discrimination as a violator of human rights and a threat to international peace and security. Two decades have passed since the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Plan of Action (2001), which stresses on the obligation of states to eliminate discrimination. The Durban Two (2009) Conference also stressed on states' commitments to eliminate discrimination. All these conferences and treaties indicate the efforts of Mankind to be free of this ugly racial discrimination phenomenon.

In spite of these commitments we are witness to the daily increase in xenophobia and lesser tolerance in the world. The bold facet of this trend is the rise of Islamophobia and its terrible and uncontrollable consequences that can clearly be seen in countries that claim to human rights.

The United States of America and rise of Islamophobia

Opinion polls have shown that not only Islamophobia exists in the United States, but it is on the rise each year. The impression of Islam and Muslims by the West as the "others", has roots in clichés of the recent years which deem Muslims as violent, oppressors and prejudiced people. Furthermore, negative feelings towards Muslims has increased following the 9/11 attacks.

According to studies, attacks against Muslims in America has notably increased by 17 percent compared to previous years. These attacks against Muslims in America have targeted women, children, the youth and families.¹

Also Federal institutions have recorded 35 percent of prejudicial attacks in 2017 against Muslims. This trend shows an unprecedented state enmity towards a religious minority in the United States.²

The current United States' President has a long history in enticing Islamophobia. Through his social network and media posts he clearly fuels the Islamophobic atmosphere in America. Mr. Trump's Islamophobic views have brought a rise in attacks against Muslims. Trump's behaviour have given legitimacy to cruel prejudice and racism within the American society, to an extent that attacks against Muslims in 2018 have been the highest following the 9/11 attacks.

The number of hate groups which specifically target Muslims in the United States, have almost tripled in 2018, and Islamophobic hate crimes have risen. This sharp rise can be equated to Donald Trump whose success has strengthened the far right. The number of known anti-Islam organizations that are active in the United States has risen from 34 in 2015 to 101 in 2016. The overall number of hate groups in America in the past two years has risen from 892 to 917.³

2015 was considered as another turning point in the growth of Islamophobia and hate related violence, the same year that Donald Trump announced his candidacy for president in other words. Trump, the President's actions include the banning of Muslims from entering the United States and expression of open hatred towards them.⁴ Only hours after the announcement of Trump's Executive Order on the suspension of travel from seven countries with majority of Muslim populations, a mosque was attacked in Victoria, Texas.

¹ http://www.islamophobia.org/images/Targeted_2018_Civil_Rights_Report.pdf

² <http://www.islamophobia.org/reports/224-2018-civil-rights-report-targeted.html>

³ <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-blame-islamophobic-anti-muslim-ban-hate-crime-numbers-southern-poverty-law-center-a7582846.html>, retrieved on 15 January 2018

⁴ Ibid

Recent FBI figures show that hate crimes against Muslims in 2015 increased by 67 percent. This increase continues and in 2017 compared to a similar period of the previous year it has seen a 17 percent increase.

Recommendations

ODVV stresses that discrimination, violence, Islamophobia and extremism are interlinked with each other, and each one strengthens the others. If no fundamental solutions are reached, this vicious circle will not stop, it will intensify.

The Human Rights Council must place in its working agenda a plan to reduce the violent Islamophobic trend and with the benefit of the opinions of various groups such as NGOs, the media, national and international institutions, and the further participation of States, reach solutions in combatting xenophobia.

ODVV expects the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression to report cases of Islamophobia and deem it as blatant discrimination and fundamental violation of human rights.

ODVV draws the attention of the member States to Islamophobia, requesting them to draft a resolution in order to set up a technical HRC panel in a regular session of the Council to review the various aspects of Islamophobia and reach a common ground in the fight against Islamophobia and elimination of racial discrimination, albeit whatever small steps.

ODVV calls on the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression to consider the existing cases and evidence of Islamophobia as violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Convention on Social and Political rights as well as the Durban Declaration and Program of Action, in order to help stop the growth of Islamophobia and its ramifications.
