



The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV)

United Kingdom

Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review 27th Session of the UPR Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council

September 2016

Executive Summary:

1- This report presents the viewpoints of Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) on the hate crimes, migrants and asylum seekers situation in United Kingdom for the third round of the country's UPR. The kingdom is expected to make more efforts to improve the aforementioned human rights challenges.

About us

2- The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a nongovernmental, nonpolitical and nonprofit organization in Special Consultative Status to ECOSOC, and was founded in 1988. Some of the benefits of the 25 year history of ODVV is the provision of legal and humanitarian services, running education courses, conducting general and thematic researches, using experienced and expertise teams on the concerns raised by society, production and publication, transfer of experiences and effective presence in international conferences.

3- ODVV is associated to or a member of the following organizations and associations:

- NGO Coalition for an International Criminal Court (CICC)
- The International Rehabilitation Centre for Torture Victims (IRCT) (membership in its Central Council)
- CONGO
- The AMAN Network of Rehabilitation Centers for Torture Victims in the MENA region, (Network's First Deputy)
- Asia Youth Network
- In Association with UNDPI

4- To-date (2016) ODVV has taken part in all Human Rights Council Sessions and submitted written and oral statements, held sideline panels, submitted consultative reports on human rights to UN mandate holders.

Data collection method

5- To present a factual picture of the areas which this report covers, the preparers drew on the findings of thematic researches, reviewing laws and the media news regarding the situation of minorities, migrants and asylum seekers.

Challenges and Difficulties

A. Role of UK in Foreign Conflicts

6- Regarding the role of UK in Yemen war, human right groups have monitored the conduct of all parties to the conflict. The results indicate abuses by the Saudi-led coalition, which is supported and armed - to the tune of £3 billion (US\$4.3 billion) over the past 12 months - by the British government. 36 unlawful coalition airstrikes have been investigated, plus an additional 15 attacks using banned cluster munitions.¹ Also, 69 unlawful strikes have been documented by international right groups,² killing civilians. Some of the attacks may amount to war crimes. In addition, a recent UN Panel of Experts report identified 119 coalition sorties that violated international humanitarian law, including attacks on schools, medical facilities and markets.³

B. Migrant Rights

7- A surge in anti-immigrant hate crimes is reported in some areas of the United Kingdom in July 2016. The figures drawn directly from local police forces' databases show consistent doubling and tripling of relevant hate crimes in parts of Britain. They go even further than the average 57 per cent nationwide increase in hate crimes reported by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC):⁴ Crimes recorded by the surveyed police force areas included public harassment, as well as racially or religiously motivated assaults – e.g. actual bodily harm and beatings. Other crimes found on the databases included: arson; threats to kill, including threatening written letters; criminal damage; and possession of a bladed weapon.⁵

8- In September 2015, Britain announced that the country would take 20,000 Syrian refugees over the course of 5 years, which would equate to 4,000 people each year.⁶ It was mentioned that between April 2011, roughly when the civil war started, and July 2015 there have been 7,030 applications by Syrians for asylum in Britain.⁷ It seems that the country would need to put more effective strategies in place in order to be able to protect the growing number of migrants against the increasing rate of hate crimes.

¹. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/21/yemen-embargo-arms-saudi-arabia>

². http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/updated_-_mde_23.4345.2016_joint_statement_-_suspend_saudi_arabia_from_the_un_human_rights_council_final_text.pdf

³. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/06/08/un-return-saudi-led-coalition-list-shame>

⁴. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brexit-hate-crime-racism-immigration-eu-referendum-result-what-it-means-eurospectic-areas-a7165056.html>

⁵. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/brexit-hate-crime-racism-immigration-eu-referendum-result-what-it-means-eurospectic-areas-a7165056.html>

⁶. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/07/uk-will-accept-up-to-20000-syrian-refugees-david-cameron-confirms>

⁷. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2015/sep/08/uk-refugee-plan-comparison-european-countries>

C. The County's Domestic Laws

9- Britain has announced decisions to repeal the Human Rights Act and replace it with a British Bill of Rights. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Committee, and the civil society, raised serious concerns that repealing the Human Rights Act could weaken the protection of human rights in the country. The right group believe that the amendment to the law could lead to the UK's withdrawal from the European Convention on Human Rights altogether.[^] Since UK has been one of the first signatories of the convention, it seems as if the decision would undermine the country's position as a defender of human rights in the international arena.

D. Recommendations

10- ODVV is calling on the British government to suspend all arms sales to Saudi Arabia, conducting serious investigations into alleged war crimes committed by the Saudi led coalition. The present foreign policy may make the British government complicit in war crimes, pave the way for further violations of international law and intensify the intolerable sufferings of the Yemeni people, in complete contradiction with the UK's commitment for protection of human rights.

11- Protect the children and families of migrants and refugees, and accede to the ICRMW and consider the possibility of ratifying the ICRMW and ILO Convention No. 143 on Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrants. Take necessary measures to avoid any use of detention for asylum seekers during the process of determining their refugee status.

12- Review the country's hate crime laws and strategies to control the dramatic rise in the crimes. In addition, the Kingdom is recommended to study and address the factors that drive the perpetrators to committing crimes and develop new preventive measures.

13. ODVV also calls on the British government to pay due attention to the concerns expressed by human right groups while making amendments to domestic laws.

[^]. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/1938/2015/en/>

[^]<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/united-kingdom/report-united-kingdom/>