



General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 February 2019

English only

Human Rights Council

Fortieth session

25 February–22 March 2019

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Al-khoei Foundation, a non- governmental organization in general consultative status

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

[11 February 2019]

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



The rise of far-right and its repercussions

Introduction

Over the recent years, extremism has been confined to religious fundamentalism. This narrative has been promoted by the media, where they demonise the whole community of a religion or race, for the actions of a small minority. As a result of this deliberate framing of extremism in the religious context, other forms of extremism, which are potentially threatening, have largely been ignored. One such example is the alarming rise of far-right.

With this prejudice embedded in the definition of extremism, the contrast between pious believers and foreign-funded militants has blurred. Furthermore, this prejudice also helped pave the way for Islamophobia in the European society. For instance, in 2015, a school child in Birmingham, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was put under the suspicion of terrorism when the student complained of the absence of a prayer room on his field trip. Statistics show that from 2007 to 2013 60% of schools' referrals to PREVENT, an anti-extremism government programme, were Muslim students¹. Where this figure hints at the issues within the Muslim community, it also highlights the discriminatory attitude towards Muslim students.

Rise of the far-right in the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Seth G. Jones, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, defines that right-wing terrorism "refers to the use or threat of violence by sub-national or non-state entities whose goals may include racial, ethnic, or religious supremacy; opposition to government authority; and the end of practices like abortion"². On the other hand, alt-right, or alternate right, is a coalition of factions. It's an arena where Nazi, neo-Nazi, white supremacists, racists and xenophobic coalesce and commit to move forward sharing common goals against religious, racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities³. Right-wing populism and white supremacists/neo-Nazi are interconnected as they enjoy a 'symbiotic relationship'⁴.

Special Rapporteur on *contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance* writes in her report that far-right poses a serious threat to Jews, Muslims, Africans, Roma, indigenous peoples, women, racial and ethnic minorities, sexually diverse people, and persons with disabilities⁵. In short, it threatens every section of the society that looks different from their (white) colour and ideology. In addition, far-right, Nazi and neo-Nazi populism is contrary to human rights norms such as equality and human dignity⁶.

In the United States, between 2007 to 2011, there were five or less hate crime attacks per year. It then rose to 14 in 2012, with a consistent pace till 2016. In 2017, 31 attacks were noted and more than 30% were against Muslims and Jews. In 2016, the US published a report

¹ Qurashi, F. (2016). Prevent gives people permission to hate Muslims – it has no place in schools. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/04/prevent-hate-muslims-schools-terrorism-teachers-reject> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019].

² Jones, S. (2018). The Rise of Far-Right Extremism in the United States. [online] Available at: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/rise-far-right-extremism-united-states> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019].

³ Berger, J. (2018). Trump Is the Glue That Binds the Far Right. [online] The Atlantic. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2018/10/trump-alt-right-twitter/574219/> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019].

⁴ Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. (2018). Agenda item 9, Thirty-eighth session. [online] Human Rights Council: Geneva, p9. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/117/79/PDF/G1811779.pdf?OpenElement> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019].

⁵ Ibid, p3.

⁶ Ibid.

which stated that 6,121 hate crimes were reported, of which 57.5% were related/motivated by race and ethnicity⁷. In addition, the US has witnessed a significant rise in anti-Semitic related incidents by nearly 60%, with 1,986 incidents occurred in 2017⁸. Since 2007, far-right terrorism has significantly increased and almost every state has witnessed far-right terrorism in the US⁹.

Similarly, in the UK, according to one estimate, anti-Semitic hate incidents have reached to a record high, with total of 1,382 in 2017¹⁰. Home Office data reveals that the largest proportion of arrested people on terrorism suspicion are individuals with white background, making it an exponential rise in last 13 years¹¹. France's violent far-right group, Generation Identitarian, has also made its footprints in the UK. This suggests that there could be a spike in violent incidents in future¹².

Technology and Internet

One of the common elements between far-right and Daesh is the (mis)use of the internet. Social media has become a breeding ground for far-right where they disseminate hate material, provide training, raise funds, recruit members, and organize protests. J.M Berger, an expert on online extremism, analysed about 30,000 Twitter accounts that belonged to alt-right and its sympathisers¹³. This shows the massive presence and strength of alt-right on digital platforms. Far-right has now its own social media site called *gab.com* where they interact freely. It is said that attacker of Pittsburgh, Robert Bowers, wrote a comment on a post on Gab before the attack that he can't tolerate more, he is going to act now¹⁴. Tommy Robinson, former English Defence League member and who is said to have close ties with Generation Identitarian UK chapter, has following of 900,000, combining his YouTube and Facebook followers¹⁵. This massive following could be used for further radicalisation of the youth.

Alt-right has tailored sites to indoctrinate children through games, music, apps, and videos. Special Rapporteur adds that there is a game design for children in which player assigned the role of neo-Nazi is tasked with killing of non-whites groups. Psychologists believe that these violent games affect child's behaviour and make them aggressive and violent.

It is seen that youth and children are more vulnerable to fall into far-right rhetoric. According to Special Rapporteur, reasons could vary but some factors such as children and youth are impressionable, feel alone and marginal, looking for an identity are common in of the most cases¹⁶.

-
- ⁷ Contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. (2018). Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance: comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, Seventy-third session. New York: United Nations, p9.
- ⁸ Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. (2018). Agenda item 9, Thirty-eighth session. [online] Human Rights Council: Geneva, p7. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/117/79/PDF/G1811779.pdf?OpenElement> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019].
- ⁹ Jones (2018).
- ¹⁰ Report of the Special Rapporteur (7:2018)
- ¹¹ Grierson, J. (2018). White people make up largest proportion of British terror arrests. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/sep/13/white-people-make-up-largest-proportion-of-terror-arrests-figures-show> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019].
- ¹² See its official website <https://www.generation-identity.org.uk/>
- ¹³ Berger, J. (2018).
- ¹⁴ Jones (2018).
- ¹⁵ Gallagher, R. (2018). British Neo-Nazis Are on the Rise — and They're Becoming More Organized and Violent. [online] The Intercept. Available at: <https://theintercept.com/2018/05/03/uk-far-right-terrorism-national-action/> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019].
- ¹⁶ Report of the Special Rapporteur (9:2018)

Structural Reasons

One important point that needs to be reasserted is the socioeconomics well-being of the people. Although it is not the fundamental driver of extremism, but it has been instrumental in shaping and influencing masses around the world. For example, some opine that far-right has capitalised the vulnerability of the middle class which feel insecure when they see foreigners ‘taking their jobs’. One of the arguments is that economic inequality advances intolerance and discrimination. And this is where the idea of racial superiority makes its space among the vulnerable segment¹⁷. Similar was the case in the Middle East where governments were unable to ensure better socioeconomic conditions of the people especially youth.

One research states that people who have experienced emotional trauma and substance abuse are most likely to peddled into terrorist propaganda¹⁸. This requires more attention and investment in the health sector to protect those vulnerable people from the far-right approach.

Direct and indirect support of politicians to far-right

Neo-Nazi ideology enjoys tacit or, sometimes explicit, support from the leaders in the US and the UK. Although they publicly deny any support to far-right groups, their statements, based on xenophobia and racial supremacy, complements the core principle of neo-Nazi ideology¹⁹.

A plethora of data confirms that since the arrival of Donald Trump as the presidents, violence by white supremacists and far-right has significantly surged. Experts on terrorism argue that during the presidentship of Obama, the element of white anxiety was central to racial-based violence. Many experts believe that far-right extremists have this perception that Donald Trump supports their cause. Gary LaFree, University of Maryland, opines that when politicians express that the country is under threat from the arrival of immigrants, this claim boosts right-wing narrative and it gives them the impression that using violence will get indirect support from the politicians²⁰.

In 2015, The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance noted that the use of racist, xenophobic, neo-Nazi and hate speech is not limited to extremist organisations. Mainstream parties and politicians have also partaken in the activities. According to 2014 report by the European Network against Racism claimed that during 2014 elections campaign of European Parliament, 42 hate speech incidents were recorded and those who were involved, five of them later became the member of the European Parliament. According to an estimate, more than 10% of the members in the European Parliament belong or have connections with those parties which propagated racist or xenophobic ideas²¹.

Far-right and looming threats for religious minorities

Religiously-motivated hate crimes have alarmingly increased to 40%, of which 52% were against Muslims. The recent 2017 Finsbury Mosque attack, 2018 Cricklewood Mosque attack, and *Punish A Muslim Day* speak volumes about the rising Islamophobia in the British society. Muslim women, particularly, are most vulnerable to hate crime due to their appearance (hijab). British Muslims have been demanding ‘proactive’ action from the government to ensure religious freedom of all minorities.

¹⁷ Report of the Special Rapporteur (11:2018)

¹⁸ (Gallagher, 2018).

¹⁹ Report of the Special Rapporteur (7:2018)

²⁰ Lowery, W., Kindy, K. and Tran, A. (2018). In the United States, right-wing violence is on the rise. [online] Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/in-the-united-states-right-wing-violence-is-on-the-rise/2018/11/25/61f7f24a-deb4-11e8-85df-7a6b4d25cfbb_story.html?utm_term=.7619ca050eef [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019].

²¹ Contemporary forms of racism (8-9:2018)

Recommendations

The biggest challenge at the stake is to revisit the definition of extremism. Data shows that far-right has presented more significant challenge than any other form of extremism in the West. But many, including religious communities, activists, and academics, believe that this rise has not received much attention comparing to religious extremism. Other than the media framing, the long creation of extremism discourse still minimises (discourages) the possibility or presence of non-religious extremism. That is why far-right crimes are sometimes taken for granted as it is considered temporary or possess 'little threat'. Nick Lowles, founder of the anti-racist and anti-fascist group Hope Not Hate, argues that the ubiquitous presence of anti-immigrant particularly anti-Muslim narrative in mainstream media, in fact, strengthens the far-right narrative²².

On the matter of policy, not all forms of extremism could be dealt with a single policy because they have different origins and trajectories. For instance, in the western societies, the element of integration has echoed in almost all counter extremism policies. But it can't be applied to far-right extremism as they are somehow integrated in the society. For this, we need a policy that aims to deconstruct the centuries-old discourse of racial supremacy and strengthen diversity and cosmopolitanism.

We need educate people about their rights and duties, integrate refugees and newcomers, and create a common-shared identity. In addition, cosmopolitanism could address the threat of isolationist politics²³.

In line with Special Rapporteur's recommendation of including civil society, we urge to add faith-based organizations to this process. This will help to increase interaction between faith groups and youth and will be productive to challenge stereotypes and fallacious ethnic/cultural supremacy.

The link between socioeconomics and vulnerability needs to be further explored in the British context and the governments must provide employment and housing to its citizens.

²² Busby, M. (2018). UK has not 'woken up' to far-right threat, says ex-counter-terror chief. [online] the Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/aug/18/former-counter-terrorism-chief-says-uk-has-not-woken-up-to-far-right-threat> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019]

²³ Özkırımlı, U. (2019). I was a natural cosmopolitan. Sweden, and the far right, changed all that. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jan/23/cosmopolitan-sweden-far-right-refuge-europe> [Accessed 31 Jan. 2019].