



General Assembly

Distr.: General
11 June 2012

English only

Human Rights Council

Twentieth session

Agenda item 9

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 the 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.

[3 June 2012]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

Racism, Islamophobia

The subject of xenophobia, racism and racial discrimination, ethnic or religious, is a subject that has involved mankind for centuries, and due to its multiple and diverse roots, and also its influence from historical, psychological and even economic complexities, there is no single cure for it. Presently a major part of the international community has deeply rooted problems in the treatment of aliens, racial and religious minorities, and the approach to followers of other religions. Despite the acceptability of a level of the intolerances and the hope for their improvement, particularly through the raising of societies' awareness and transparency of wrong views and beliefs, nevertheless the observation of strong and rooted racist movements and also Islamophobia in Europe, in spite of the human rights claims of this continent is a deep regret.

Nowadays, a new wave of anti-Muslim intolerance and antagonism is sweeping Europe. The far right political gains seen in some parts of the continent are alarming. Anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and extreme right parties seem to be cashing in on economic hardship and austerity measures. In a blinkered world of "us and them" they have found in Europe's Muslim citizens the "others".

It is disheartening that a continent that had learnt many lessons in such a hard way, after the devastation of the two World Wars, and which prides itself in equality and human rights, is allowing itself to be influenced by the forces of intolerance and hate. It is now open season to malign Muslims because of their religious and cultural practices. Yet Muslim immigrants arriving after the war joined the effort to rebuild economies of war-torn Europe in the 1950s. In almost every field of life, Muslims have been an integral part of the European tapestry. Muslims are today at home in Europe, have been contributors to its past and are stakeholders in its future.

Yet the language and rhetoric used by the Far Rights and the level of political expediency in mainstream European politics is mind boggling. The hate mongers are apparently succeeding in swapping a racist agenda for an Islamophobic one. The lacklustre response from European leaders has paved the way for anti-Muslim bigotry to move closer to the mainstream.

Sadly it seems that in the recent years views have grown in Europe which previously made their appearance in different clothes on this continent, anti-multiculturalism, anti-immigrant, anti-intellectualism, and even anti-women, with the only difference being anti-Semitism instead of Islamophobia. Over several decades these views have tried to put the blame on "others" whenever a crisis has happened in Europe, "others" who are not with "us" and their presence is the root cause of the problems. But the fact of the matter is that it's the presence of the same "others" that has created the "multi-culturalistic" structure of European nations, and is the main cause for the advancement of Europe in this century.

Sadly, observing the developments of the last few months regarding European countries, especially during election campaigns, we can notice the large volume of violation cases and particularly intentional or unintentional enticement by the media to these issues, has caused the deepening of racist and Islamophobic views.

While condemning these types of measures which will achieve nothing but the escalation of pointless religious hatred, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, for the second time calls upon the Human Rights Council to give importance to subjects such as the promotion of dialogue among religions and transparency and remove ambiguities from incorrect interpretations and beliefs of monotheist religions more than before, and to give the two Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Religion and Belief joint mandates to find a practical and lasting solution to fight this problem.

We hope that by accepting and starting this initiative, for followers of monotheist religions have peaceful coexistence everywhere in a good atmosphere that is away from common prejudices and bigotries, in peace and harmony and by respecting the beliefs of each other.
