



General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 February 2017

English only

Human Rights Council

Thirty-fourth 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.

[11 February 2017]

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

GE.17-02335(E)



* 1 7 0 2 3 3 5 *

Please recycle



Donald Trump and Islamophobia

Islamophobia is not a hidden phenomenon anymore; it has turned into a common feature of contemporary political discourse. It is “an exaggerated fear, hatred, and hostility toward Islam and Muslims that is perpetuated by negative stereotypes resulting in bias, discrimination, and the marginalization and exclusion of Muslims from social, political, and civic life”.¹ However, the phobia is partly fuelled by the media coverage of the statements made by political figures. Famous characters can influence the mind-set of their fans and followers, exacerbating xenophobic feelings that can be reflected in violent behaviour.

In a very recent example, the new president of the United States of America, Donald Trump, has used repeatedly the Islamophobic rhetoric in his remarks and for advocating policies that target Muslim Americans. However, Trump’s anti-Muslim policies are proven to be supported by 25 percent of Americans².

There is also evidence indicating that Trump’s viewpoints on Muslims are associated with recurring cases of harassment against Muslims in the country. Within one week after the elections, the Council on American-Islamic Relations recorded more than 100 incidents of Muslims harassments³. Such circumstances made Governor Andrew Cuomo of New York to establish a special police unit to address the increase in hate crimes across the state⁴.

Trump has never appeared to have any policy for preventing violence against millions of American Muslims. His only answer to the repeated questions of worried Muslims about his plans on how to deal with hate crimes is that they need to report cases of crime. The new president, who feels free to associate “Islam” with “terrorism”⁵ doesn’t seem to be specifically bothered about protection of millions of American Muslim minorities. In many occasions his speech has triggered hate against Muslims to a point that he has earned fame as the Islamophobic president. His executive order that ban Muslim from travelling to the United States, which was also condemned by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, clearly reflects his strong bias against Muslims⁶.

Xenophobic remarks are proven to be an important root cause of crimes against Muslims. The results of a recent study released by California State University-San Bernardino’s Centre for the Study of Hate and Extremism indicate that political rhetoric can trigger hate crimes. The study shows that Trump’s anti-Muslim remarks could have contributed to a backlash against American Muslims. Using the official data of twenty US states and drawing on numerous studies conducted on the feeling of hatred toward Muslims, the study suggests the widespread Islamophobia across the country⁷.

Hate speech and xenophobic expressions have been frequently referred to as sources of serious concern by the UN experts, specially the UN Special Rapporteur on “Minority Rights”⁸, the Special Rapporteur on “Freedom of Religion and Belief”⁹, Special Rapporteur on “Contemporary Forms of Racism”¹⁰, UN Special Rapporteur on “Human Rights of

¹ . Wajahat Ali, Eli Clifton, Matthew Duss, Lee Fang, Scott Keyes, and Faiz Shakir, “Fear, Inc.: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America” (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, 2011), available at <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2011/08/pdf/islamophobia.pdf>

² . <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/10/politics/donald-trump-muslims-poll/>

³ . <http://www.islamophobia.org/2-uncategorised/182-anti-muslim-bias-incidents-post-election.html>

⁴ . <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/11/20/us/hate-crime-unit-new-york/>

⁵ . <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/president-donald-trump-inauguration-eradicate-isis-terrorism-islamist-speech-latest-a7538171.html>

⁶ . <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/12/08/trumps-muslim-ban-is-grossly-irresponsible-says-u-n-human-rights-chief/>

⁷ . <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3110202-SPECIAL-STATUS-REPORT-v5-9-16-16.html>

⁸ . www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/.../A_HRC_28_64_ENG.doc;
www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/.../A_HRC_28_64_Add_1_en.doc

⁹ . www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/.../A_HRC_28_66_ENG.doc

Migrants”¹¹ and Special Rapporteur on “Freedom of Opinion and Expression”¹². The experts consider expression of hate as a major root cause of various forms of violence and crimes. Moreover, the UN has been striving toward combatting xenophobic language in the media and fostering inclusive integration of minorities in societies. Ban Ki Moon has warned that negative remarks against migrants are reaching levels of frequency and public acceptance¹³. Also, in a high-level event on combating anti-Muslim discrimination, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has strongly criticized expressions of Islamophobia, encouraging the world to follow “the principles of inclusion, tolerance and mutual understanding to recognize the value of diversity.”¹⁴

Studies show that hate expression can be harmful to societies in various ways. A Pyramid of Hate is introduced by researchers of the field that illustrates the outcomes of discriminatory remarks expressed towards a vulnerable group. According to the Pyramid, the consequences of hate speech can vary from a “personal bias” toward a specific group; “acts of prejudice” such as bullying and name calling; discrimination against a social group; acts of targeted violence against them and finally “genocide”¹⁵. Atrocity crimes are the extreme forms of violence that do not frequently occur, however, discriminatory rhetoric of political leaders can lead to marginalization of targeted groups and a social divide within the population marked by scattered cases of violent acts toward minorities.

Encouragement of mutual trust and protecting minority rights promotes social integrity, a feeling of social inclusion, and social belonging as compared to marginalization of vulnerable groups. It is regretful to see the top political figure of the most powerful country of the world has chosen a rhetoric contrary to that of the United Nations standards and values, while the shapers of public opinion must be more committed to encouraging equality, countering stereotypes and promoting solidarity.

Recommendations:

Our organization echoes the UN High Commissioner’s remarks against Donald Trump’s ban on travel to the US from some Muslim-majority countries, since it is “mean-spirited” and violates international human rights law¹⁶.

Our organization calls on the Human Rights Council to study the best practices of countering politicians’ hate speech which is setting a new precedent in official violation of UN standards.

Our organization calls on the Special Procedures to create a database and record all cases of Islamophobia and the relationship between “politicians’ hateful remarks” and “escalation of hate crimes against minorities”.

We call on all member states to sanction the use of hateful remarks by political figures who shape public opinion and trigger hate crimes.

¹⁰ . <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55736#.WISVSHGUeSw>

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/gashc4182.doc.htm>

¹¹ . <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/nov/18/australias-immigration-policies-have-promoted-xenophobia-un-expert>

¹² . <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N12/501/25/PDF/N1250125.pdf?OpenElement>

¹³ . http://www.un.org/pga/70/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2015/08/21-Apr_Refugees-and-Migrants-21-April-2016.pdf

¹⁴ . <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55983#.WJ6rQnGUeSx>

¹⁵ .

http://www.unicri.it/special_topics/hate_crimes/Backgrounds_Experiences_and_Responses_to_Online_Hate_Speech_A_Comparative_Cross-Country_Analysis.pdf

¹⁶ . <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-muslim-travel-ban-illegal-un-rights-chief-a7552991.html>