

OSCE/ODIHR and EU Institutions hold Joint Day of Action against Antisemitism and Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination

OSCE (31.05.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2rEb9gh> – Representatives of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and European Union bodies, as well as from civil society groups came together today in Brussels for a Joint Day of Action against Antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination.

The day, organized by ODIHR, the European Commission (EC), European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI) and in co-operation with the the European Parliament Working Group on Antisemitism (WGAS) and the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS), included workshops, presentations and discussions focusing directly on current issues related to Antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination.

The Joint Day began with a public discussion in the European Parliament (EP) that brought together MEPs, media professionals, researchers and Muslim community representatives to analyse and discuss the portrayal and participation of Muslims in the media.

Sajjad Karim MEP, Vice-President of the European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI) said *“Today’s Joint Day of Action has been a great exercise in raising awareness of the portrayal and participation of Muslims in the media. Bringing together so many different stakeholders and*

representatives has led to a truly rewarding discussion. Following last week's cowardly attack in Manchester, it is important now, more than ever, that we counter hate speech and biased coverage of communities targeted by racism, discrimination and intolerance. However, it is just as vital that we do not endanger freedom of expression. I hope that today's debate will encourage this by allowing closer co-operation between civil society on developing measures which are effective against both hate speech and for freedom of expression."

Another session in the EP entailed a public presentation of ODIHR's new publication, *Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities – a Practical Guide*". The publication lists practical steps that governments, in co-operation with Jewish communities, can undertake to prevent and respond to Antisemitic hate crimes and better address the security needs of Jewish communities.

Mairead McGuinness, MEP and First Vice-President of the European Parliament, said *"when it comes to our Jewish communities today, respect for their human dignity – a fundamental European value – is sadly lacking in many places, and in many ways. We must tackle this through education, through communication, and through working with groups and individuals susceptible to anti-Semitic ideas. But we must also ensure that public authorities take the necessary steps to ensure the safety and security of our Jewish communities."*

At another event, the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (IJPR) presented the findings of a new study, commissioned by ODIHR, on the specific impact of Antisemitism on Jewish youth. The study reveals that young women and men are particularly affected by Antisemitism and are more likely to experience verbal Antisemitic insults or harassment and physical attacks, to witness Antisemitic attacks or experience Antisemitic discrimination, or to be threatened in person, attacked online or followed in a threatening way because they are Jewish.

Later in the day a joint roundtable organized by the European Commission and ODIHR and hosted at the Commission's headquarters brought together civil society organizations working specifically on the issue of anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination.

"Today's Joint Day of Action serves as an opportunity to remind us that concrete and urgent action is needed to ensure that manifestations of all forms of intolerance do not tear at the fabric of social stability across the OSCE region" said Cristina Finch, Head of ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department. "While the primary responsibility for addressing acts of intolerance and discrimination rests with participating States, including their political representatives, it is important to stress that initiatives addressing these issues are more effective when a broad range of actors are involved in the process, including the media and civil society."

The Joint Day coincided with the Muslim holiday of Ramadan and the Jewish holiday of Shavuot and concluded with an interfaith dinner at the European Jewish Community Center that brought together activists working on issues of Antisemitism and intolerance against Muslims to discuss joint approaches to addressing intolerance and discrimination.

Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European Commission concluded: *"Combating racism, xenophobia and intolerance goes to the heart of our common European project. By coming together today, the Jewish and Muslim communities are sending out a strong signal that there is no harbour for hate or discrimination in their communities. For history teaches us that hatred against one minority often spills over to others. Our Coordinators on combating Antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred ensure that the concerns and ideas of these communities are heard loud and clear. Over the past three years, we have also stepped up our close cooperation with international institutions – such as ODIHR and the Council of*

Europe – which are doing great work in this field. In this spirit, I warmly welcome today's Joint Day of Action."

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