



General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 June 2018

English only

Human Rights Council

Thirty-eighth session

18 June-6 July 2018

Agenda item 9

**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related
forms of intolerance, follow-up to and implementation
of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

Joint written statement* submitted by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, the Asian-Eurasian Human Rights Forum and the International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples, non- governmental organizations 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.

[18 May 2018]

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

GE.18-08868(E)



* 1 8 0 8 8 6 8 *

Please recycle A small graphic of a recycling symbol, consisting of three chasing arrows forming a triangle.



Racism and Racial Discrimination: A Continuous Challenge to the World Community

More than 16 years after the convening of the United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR) and the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action in Durban (South Africa) in September 2001, little progress has been achieved in the world efforts to free human society from the wrath of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, which were adopted by consensus by WCAR's participants, were considered by many observers as the most important international framework in the world's collective efforts to combat racism and racial discrimination in the post-apartheid era. At WCAR, governments committed themselves to implement national plans of actions and to introduce revolutionary concepts to combat racism, bigotry and racial discrimination in all their forms and manifestations. They also agreed that periodic review should be undertaken by the world community to evaluate the progress made at the national levels and in the world collective efforts to fight these destructive phenomena.

The victims of racism continue to attach special importance to the elimination of racism and discrimination as well as cultural and religious bigotry and other related forms and manifestations of intolerance, which had been identified at WCAR as some of the major ills of today's world and that they are growing in danger and magnitude. Systematic racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance against certain groups of people prepare the ground for the commission of violence and other heinous crimes against them on the one hand and on the other hand they lead to armed violence and political unrest when the victims resort to violent resistance to challenges their oppressors, which in turn leads to large-scale persecution, mass atrocities and even genocide and extermination.

Unfortunately, the hopes raised at WCAR were miserably dashed by fear, lack of political will and by the continued assault on the historical achievements in the Durban documents from hate mongers. The blind spirit of revenge and intolerance associated with the ongoing "*war against terrorism*" is largely responsible for destroying most of the achievements reached at Durban and at present, discrimination and related intolerance prevail in many societies, especially in Western Europe. The progressive gains of right-wing and ultra-nationalist political parties in Europe such as the Party for Freedom (Netherlands), Swedish Democrats (Sweden), Danish People's Party (Denmark), German People's Party (Germany), Freedom Party (Austria), Front National (France), the Northern League (Italy), the British National Party/UK Independence Party (UKIP) and Swiss People's Party or (UDC) should send alarming signals. These ultra-right political formations are increasingly represented in national parliaments thus they are exercising noticeable influence on the legislative and executive branches of government in their respective countries.

The situation could get out of control as some irresponsible politicians frequently make unwarranted high-profile expressions of racism, sexism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and intolerance. A case in point is the current administration of the United States of America. In this regard we believe that the world community should join hands with African nations in condemning the racist and vile words attributed to President Donald Trump on the question of immigration to the USA in early 2018, when he collectively labelled African nations and Haiti in a denigrating and vulgar language. In this respect, we fully concur with the statements issued by the Government of Botswana on 12 January 2018 and that of the Group of African Ambassadors in New York on 12 January 2018 denouncing the racist behaviour of President Donald Trump and we call on the world to condemn in the strongest terms "*... the continuing and growing trend from the US administration toward Africa and people of African descent to denigrate the continent and people of colour.*"

We are concerned that Islamophobia or the fear of Islam and hatred of Muslims, which is a compounding factor of racism and discrimination, is in the increase in some countries, especially in the United States of America. It is condemnable that the US Administration under President Trump started office by issuing Executive Order 13769, entitled "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorists Entry into the United States", commonly known as the Muslims Ban. This widely condemned racist and discriminatory measure banned the entry into the United States of citizens of 7 pro-dominantly Muslim countries. Executive Order 13769 entered into effect from 27 January 2017, until 16 March 2017, when it was superseded by Executive Order 13780, another discriminatory government measures that take the world back to the days of institutional racism.

It is a matter of grave concern that Islamophobic discourse, which is characterized by misinformation and misunderstanding of Islam and its teachings, claims to be targeting radical Islamic political movements, however, its effects make no such distinction. Islamophobia and the hatred of Muslims are nourished by malicious media campaigns which associate Muslims with political movements that resort to militant interpretation of Islamic teachings or violence. This mistaken association is propagated despite the fact that Islam abhors violence against civilians under any pretext including during times of war. It is also noteworthy that average individuals, among the 1.5 billion Muslims of the world, are neither linked with militant political movements nor condone their practices. The campaign against Islam and Muslims in Western Europe takes different forms ranging from the defamation of Islam and vilifying Muslim personalities through the print and audio-visual material to the prohibition of Muslim religious and cultural symbols. More often than not, Islamophobia and the hatred of Muslims are fostered by racism and anti-immigrant sentiments.

It is observed that anti-Islam and anti-Muslim political rhetoric increase during times of national or local elections in Western Europe. Far-right political parties appeal to voters on comprehensive plans for socio-economic, cultural and political change that reject the existing systems and purport to preserve European identity and idiosyncratic values against intrusion of foreigners. Rising unemployment levels and cuts in governments' spending caused by financial hardships are also noticed as triggers of Islamophobic incidents. Right-wing parties target Muslims and foreigners in order to increase their electoral audience taking advantage that the propagation of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim political rhetoric is a major factor in their electoral success. This strategy is reminiscent of the propaganda used by Nazi and Fascist elements in the 1930s to control governments and to prepare for wars that caused one of the greatest tragedies during 1939-1945. In recent years, there are reports about hundreds of Muslim places of worship, schools and community centres that were either burned down by arsonist right-wing extremist groups, defiled with insulting texts and neo-Nazi graffiti or desecrated with manure and blood etc.

Conclusion and recommendations:

1. Throughout history racism, discrimination and religious and ethnic intolerance has caused immeasurable pain and sorrow to millions of people in many parts of the world and they continue to do so in today's world. Combating racism and discrimination in all their forms and manifestations is therefore the responsibility of all members of the human society.
2. The world has achieved important progress in combating racism and discrimination by dismantling *de jure* racism and racial discrimination following the defeat of apartheid in the southern parts of the continent of Africa and the downfall of the system of racial segregation in the United States of America. These positive developments are indicative that similar progress can be achieved in the fight against racism, discrimination and intolerance when states and nations make the strategic decision to fight these dangerous enemies.
3. The growing popularity of ultra-right-wing and Islamophobic political parties in Western Europe is a serious threat to Europe's traditions of tolerance, freedom, liberalism and equality. Self-centric and intolerant political agendas proffered by these groups endanger the foundation of Western European democracies. It would also put in peril peaceful co-existence among the different religions and negatively affect international cooperation between Muslims and European nations.
4. Propagation of Islamophobia and hatred of Muslims is a dangerous phenomenon which is increasingly associated with violence and hate crimes. Such propagation cannot, therefore, be considered a question of freedom of expression but rather as a crime under law such as incitation to racial hatred and violence.

*Euro-African Forum on Rights and Development and Omar Al-Mukhtar International Association, NGOs without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.