

VALLETTA/WARSAW/ANKARA, 15 March 2024 – Amidst an increase in prejudice and violence against Muslims in a growing number of countries, greater efforts are needed to build dialogue and counter anti-Muslim hatred, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe said in a statement on today's International Day to Combat Islamophobia.



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PRESS RELEASE

More determined efforts needed to combat anti-Muslim prejudice amidst surge in hatred, OSCE says

VALLETTA/WARSAW/ANKARA, 15 March 2024 – Amidst an increase in prejudice and violence against Muslims in a growing number of countries, greater efforts are needed to build dialogue and counter anti-Muslim hatred, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe said in a statement on today's International Day to Combat Islamophobia.

The Chair-in-Office of the OSCE, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs and Trade of Malta Ian Borg stated that “On this day, we are reminded of our collective duty to counter prejudice and embrace diversity” emphasising that “Our strength lies in our unity and our unwavering resolve to foster societies where dialogue prevails over confrontation, understanding over fear and tolerance over prejudice – a society where fundamental freedoms and human rights are protected and enjoyed by all.” Minister Borg called on all participating States “to intensify commitments and actions towards this crucial endeavour, striving to nurture an environment where every person can live free from hate and discrimination.”

Hatred against people from specific religious or belief communities rarely takes place in isolation, often

going hand in hand with other forms of intolerance. Violence and discrimination do not only harm the individuals and communities concerned, but can also undermine security across the OSCE region, with tensions potentially escalating into wider conflicts.

There has been an upsurge in hatred against Muslims especially since the renewed outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East in October last year, with online and offline hate speech, threats and violence having a negative impact on Muslim communities, particularly women and girls. OSCE states have recognized the need for political leaders and parliamentarians to reject and condemn manifestations of racism, xenophobia, and intolerance against Muslims and other religious groups, while continuing to respect freedom of expression.

“Negative stereotypes and acts of intolerance and discrimination against Muslims have increased in recent years, making it all the more important to take urgent action and ensure we avoid stigmatisation or inflammatory rhetoric,” said ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci. “At the same time, we are encouraged by the growing recognition that more dialogue and understanding are needed. I am convinced this must remain a crucial contribution to successfully counter prejudice and anti-Muslim hatred.”

All OSCE participating States have committed to combating discrimination and hate crime, and it is the primary responsibility of governments to ensure all citizens are safe, whatever their background, and to promote respect and dialogue. Supporting countries across the OSCE region in combating anti-Muslim hate crime is a key area of ODIHR’s work, but while data on Anti-Muslim hatred is available in ODIHR’s [hate crime database](#), many victims across the OSCE area are reluctant to report their experiences to the authorities. Victims of hate often turn to civil society organizations to report a crime, seek support, and access the services they need. Through genuine collaboration with civil society, states can develop efficient and targeted activities to tackle hate crime and meet the differing needs of individual victims.

Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right that states the right of each individual to have, adopt, or leave a religion or belief. At its core is the understanding that respecting our differences is the only way for us to live together peacefully. Against this backdrop, dialogue and understanding between religions and cultures emerge as a pivotal instrument, offering a platform for open, respectful exchanges that transcend religious boundaries. Through these meaningful interactions, we can discover common ground, appreciate our differences, and forge an inclusive and harmonious path forward.

The Personal Representative of the Chair-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, Ambassador Evren Dagdelen Akgun, noted that “Cases of deliberate attempts to tarnish the sanctity of Islam, of Muslims being stereotyped, attacked; instances of their beliefs belittled or culture represented as a threat and justified in the guise of security concerns are widespread, even normalized in some countries.” She underlined that “efforts to address these problems in their entirety will not only contribute to harmonious societies but also to international peace.” Dagdelen Akgun urged all participating states to search for ways to effectively implement their commitments.

Acknowledging the discrimination and hatred many Muslims face worldwide, the United Nations has declared March 15 the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. All OSCE states have [committed](#) to fighting prejudice, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims and members of other religions.

For PDF attachments or links to sources of further information, please visit:

<https://www.osce.org/chairpersonship/564821>

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