

## **ODVV Statement on Seventh session of the Forum on Minority Issues**

### **Organization For Defending Victims Of Violence**

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#### *ODVV Statement on Seventh session of the Forum on Minority Issues*

Responding to Violence and Atrocity Crimes: The Role of Education Essentially atrocity crimes are born of bigotry and hatred. Hate crimes can take different forms, ranging from the attack of innocent civilians and beating them to death solely on the basis of their religion or ethnicity to widespread massacres and genocides as with the cases of genocide in Rwanda and Bosnia and now in Iraq and Syria. In biased- motivated crimes, civilians are attacked or massacred simply because of their belief or ethnicity. Evidently hate crimes result in the violation of all human rights, including the right to life, the right to food, health, etc and predominantly the rights of children and women. Hence, once widespread violence and atrocity breaks out, many members of the international community, including the neighboring countries, the UN and the related bodies are negatively affected. Needless to say, preventing atrocity crimes and responding to them is a priority for the international community.

As stated in paragraph 76 of “the Draft Recommendations”, raising public awareness and educating people to understand and respect the rights of minority, acts as a platform for the protection of members of minority groups against violence. Education is one of the best techniques to address, prevent and respond to violence against minorities. Educational campaigns can facilitate inter-ethnic or inter-religious dialogues and promote understanding of and respect for minority rights. It will provide the minorities with the platform for dialogue and to participate in negotiations with members of their community, so that there will be fewer tendencies for members of minority groups and their exponents to respond to violence with violence.

Furthermore educational campaigns have the capacity to counter hate crimes and protect minorities against violence. For instance by promoting slogans that encourage people to endorse mutual understanding, educational campaigns can emphasize on the importance of education as a form of counter-violence activity. All civil society organizations can document cases of violence against minorities; they can provide victims with assistance and positive interventions in line with their educational efforts. They can present anti-violence projects to the police force, the judiciary, other government bodies, NGOs, schools and universities.

Educational efforts can also focus on other areas, such as training professionals, including attorneys and counsellors to deal with violence.

The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) believes that a holistic education-based response to violence is one of the best techniques to deal with violence against minorities and calls on all States to present and enforce their commitment to the prevention of violence through education.

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Religious Extremism and Minority Rights

Throughout history, the rights of minorities and their organized violation have presented a real problem with respect to international law. Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights states: "In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language." According to Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: "genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group;".

Unfortunately today we see the unfolding of violence and religious extremism more than any other time in the history of Islam; gaining momentum on a daily basis. The region of the Middle East is burning in the flames of violence and in particular sectarian violence. These tragic events are unfolding whilst, human rights institutions, academics and intellectuals in the West either do not want to or are unable to prevent these catastrophes from advancing. Sadly the basic notions of logic and moderation do not have any supporters among those whom are exponents of arbitrariness and barbarism, the very people who have unjustly turned the Middle East into their battle ground.

Today we are in a situation where we should not limit our human rights concerns to a specific geographical region, we must take into account the world as a whole using the international arena as our platform. Thus we must concordantly take action, because an effective response to violence requires the cooperation of all countries. A year ago, the then president elect of Iran warned the world about the institutionalization of violence and religious extremism, in a draft resolution in the UN General Assembly which was later approved. Once again we draw the attention of this Council to the contents of the resolution.

However, considering the ratified international conventions and other signed antiterrorism documents, there exists, still an unanswered question: Have these documents been put into force? Unfortunately so far it seems that the only solution to the problem of dealing with the massacres in terror campaigns has been to neglect such incidents. Targeted and careless sanctions disregard the slaughter of innocent civilians. Turning a blind eye to such form of terrorism has been the only decision made against such acts of violence. The consequence of this passivity is that the criminals are progressively getting bolder and continue to massacre civilians and violate human rights unabated.

For the prevention of the ongoing violence, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) gives the following recommendations:

1 - The roots of violence must be detected both theoretically and practically, and the "World against Violence and Extremism" slogan must change to "the Culture of Confrontation with Religious Extremism".

2 – Risk factors for violence such as poverty, inequality of income, discrimination, injustice and feelings of humiliation must be eliminated. At the international level, it is not realistic to request states to develop peaceful political relations with each other whilst some States benefit from welfare and others are suffering from poverty. Poverty breeds negative sensitivity and when this sensitivity is created, it is not possible to live in harmony.

3 - The suitable and worthy realization of the rights of minorities: if in a society, minorities have little participation and would like to play an active role, then they must be provided with equal opportunities to have more social, political and cultural participation, reduce their deprivations, and advance themselves as a group enjoying their basic human rights.

4 - Sustainable world peace is the resolute rejection of violence. Violence is in conflict with peace among the peoples, and the worst type of violence is one that is carried out in the name of religion

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#### Prevention of Violence and Crimes Committed against Religious Minorities

The rapidly changing challenges of today's world, has created a serious concern for peace seeking nations and countries. They are required to present joint solutions in application of their peace protecting policies. The recent developments and incidents in the world, the new religious approaches and the breakouts of violence have made the fulfillment of the objective of mankind namely: "making peace in the world" conditional to fundamental reforms and initiatives.

The spread of the unpleasant roots of violence and extremism in today's world has destroyed the tranquility of innocent civilians through war, violence and sectarian conflicts. Unfortunately the adherents of violence and religious extremism, who have fallen into the trap of barbaric slaughter and the infliction of pain, have no consideration for logic and moderation. Subsequently the route for any form of human dialogue has been blocked as a result of reactionary prejudice and political objectives. The conscience of Mankind rejects and deems any form of irrationality and violent crimes committed against various religious minorities, their attempts to communicate false messages to the world a great and unjust oppression. In Islam, extensive capacities exist in all human and social bases, which indicate Islam's efforts for individuals to collectively reach peace and equity in a safe world which is free from violence; because religion always stresses on wisdom and moderation, and intrinsically perceives peace and equity as its platform. It must be noted that today, violence against religious minorities has been created by those who claim the protection of minorities. Although today there exists the problem that the topic of the "realization of minorities' rights" has become more of a political tool, rather than engaging with peace seeking concerns.

The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) strongly condemns crimes committed against different religious minorities around the world and the brutal, inhumane and un-Islamic atrocities committed by ISIS, a group that does not recognize any religious groups and minorities, and falsely claims to be moving forward with the flag of wisdom.

It appears to be of the utmost necessity for religious scholars, intellectuals and the flag bearers of peace and logic to express their views about all sects and extremist minorities with clarity.