

## Seventh session of the forum on minority issues

“Preventing and addressing violence and atrocity crimes targeted against minorities”

### Agenda Item 3

“Understanding the root causes of violence and atrocity crimes”

Statement by Scales 4 Justice

Delivered by Daniela Dönges

Thank you Mr President,

As it was reiterated numerous times today only a deep understanding of the root causes of violence affecting minorities can ensure an effective prevention.

In this context it is however important to realize that such crimes are frequently the result of a long socio-psychological process and that it is therefore of utmost importance to recognize the first signs of racism inside a society, especially when such tendencies are institutionalized. If no timely action is taken against, mass atrocities and hate crimes are the tragic result, yet they are neither the beginning nor the root cause of the problem.

We are therefore deeply concerned about countries like Pakistan, where minorities are often discriminated based on their religious affiliation and blasphemy laws are unfairly applied against minorities, as shows the prominent case of Asia Bibi. Few months ago she was sentenced to death for the second time by the Court, who has been delaying the hearing against the death sentence due to the pressure from extremist groups. The situation found its tragic peak a few weeks ago when a Christian couple was burnt alive by a mob for allegedly having burnt pages of the Qur'an. Lack of condemnation from side of religious and political leaders encourages such actions. International pressure is urgently needed in order to avert future incidents.

We are equally concerned about is the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, where years of occupation and illegal expansion of settlements have led to a situation where double law standards, discriminate and humiliation are the daily reality for Palestinians. The level of dehumanization does not remain confined to incitement and hate-speech, but spilled over into street-level violence. Over the past month Israeli youths have been seen chanting *niggers go home* and *death to the Arabs* in the streets and few hours after the deplorable recent attacks in Jerusalem, Israeli journalist Emily Amrousi said that the life of a single Jewish child was more important to her than the lives of thousands of Palestinian children. The same evening 70 settlers attacked a Palestinian school and two young men were severely injured by settler attacks. Two days ago the young man, Monther Ziadeh, was stabbed by Israeli settlers at a checkpoint North of Hebron in front of the soldiers' eyes. Nevertheless the Israeli governments seems to have only one response to the conflict, which is increasing the pressure rather than ending the occupation.

Mr President the above mentioned cases show that in order to prevent atrocities and hate crimes the international community must recognize the first sign of racism and hate. If we do not take swift and firm action future escalation might be unavoidable.