

Dear Madam Chair, my name is Gözde. 2018 OHCHR minority former fellow and representing religious minority in Turkey. I would like to kindly bring to your attention issues related to hate speech against minorities in Turkey.

For many decades, the Turkish society encompasses a diverse community. Regardless of race, language, religion, over the years, we have always lived with a great sense of tolerance towards each other. However, as a results of the populist approaches coupled with the present political discourse by politicians, people have turned to using hate speech toward each other and this has somehow separated our communities. This has of course increased the challenge on minorities stemming from discrimination, isolation, non-transparent rule of law and not forgetting the negative political discourse.

The lack of trust for the governmental mechanism and distrust in the judiciary system has also made about 97% of the minority communities in Turkey not to resort to taking any legal action against hate speech.

In spite of many concerns raise regarding the various restrictions, the constitution does not have clear emphasis on regulations related to diversity, pluralism and tolerance. Again, expressions of hate speech cannot continue to benefit from freedom of expression.

With all this, I will therefore like to give-in following recommendations to Turkey:

- 1- There must be a legal reform to eliminate the problems concerning freedom of expression and hate speech in Turkey.
- 2- I should also underline here that there is a need for a serious change of mindset most especially among political leaders' style of communication. It is important for political leaders to understand that they are affecting society's perception with their chosen language of expression.
- 3- It is also necessary to adopt legal regulations on hate speech that contain a comprehensive, proportionate, and deterrent provisions on civil, criminal, and administrative law.
- 4- I would also like to state that it would be beneficial to establish an independent and authoritative specialized institution that meet international standards to work on hate speech.