PRESS STATEMENT

75 years after Kristallnacht: Jews in Europe still face racist violence

Brussels, 15 November 2013 - On 12 and 13 November, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) met with policy makers and practitioners in Vilnius, Lithuania to discuss concrete strategies on how to combat hate crime in the EU more efficiently. The prevalence of anti-Semitism in Europe was highlighted, following a recent FRA survey, which indicated significant levels of discrimination against Jewish communities in the 8 EU countries surveyed (France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Latvia, Sweden, and the UK). For example, 66% of the survey respondents regarded anti-Semitism to be a major problem in their countries, and 33% expressed fear they may become victim of physical violence over the next year.

Since perpetrators of hate crime rarely target only one group, ENAR reminds of the strong need for coalitions between communities like Jews, Muslims, Roma, and people of African descent to bolster more effective resistance against hate speech and violence. Intercommunity solidarity and mutual respect will be essential ahead of the European elections in 2014 to bring attention to shared ethnic minority concerns, such as the experience of discrimination and insufficient political representation. Coalitions will also be necessary to prevent the far right and populists from exploiting misconceptions and stereotypes in order to drive a wedge between minority communities.

ENAR further recommends that:

- Political leaders and representatives commit to a zero-tolerance attitude to anti-Semitism and racism and actively denounce hatred. In addition, they should actively promote the many contributions of Jews to European society.
- EU and its Member States confront the ineffectiveness of Holocaust education in Europe. Educators must stress the links between hate speech and hate crime in the past and present. Contemporary hatred of Jews cannot be seen apart from the racism that culminated in the murder of six million Jews during the Second World War.
- EU and Member States address the lack of effective redress and access to justice for victims of hate crime. Too often, there is an atmosphere of impunity; racism and prejudice are not treated as aggravating factors. Victims tend to remain uninformed about their legal rights and their court proceedings. Underreporting due to lack of trust in police authorities must be remedied.
- EU and Member States begin taking steps toward the effective implementation of the Victims’ Directive, so that all victims are guaranteed individual-based assistance and aftercare.
- Member States improve and harmonise mechanisms for collecting data on hate crime in the EU in order to monitor the number of incidents, design appropriate and cost-effective policies, and evaluate change over time.

ENAR chair Sarah Isal said: “Today, almost exactly 75 years after Kristallnacht, Europe continues to be a stronghold of anti-Semitism and racism. In a European climate marked by increasing levels of racist and anti-Semitic violence as well as persistent efforts by the far right to polarise communities, the demand has never been greater for intercommunity solidarity. Through mutual respect and cooperation, ethnic minority communities have a better chance of strengthening their political leverage and achieving positive change”.
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Notes to the editor:
1. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR aisbl) stands up against racism and discrimination and advocates for equality and solidarity for all in Europe. We connect local and national anti-racist NGOs throughout Europe and act as an interface between our member organisations and the European institutions. We voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates.