



**Statement by the Honorable Alcee L. Hastings  
Co-Chairman, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe  
Hearing on “Promoting Tolerance and Understanding in the OSCE Region:  
The Role of the Personal Representatives”  
October 14, 2009**

Mr. Chairman, I would underscore the leadership role the Helsinki Commission has provided and continues to provide on the issues before us this morning. Indeed, we have convened nearly a dozen hearing on various aspects of intolerance in the OSCE region. In addition to the longstanding concerns over anti-Semitism and related violence you have described, The Commission has paid increasing attention to the scourge of racism prevalent in many OSCE countries today, a phenomenon to which I can personally attest. With great frequency we received reports of violence against individuals based on their color be they of African or Asian descent or counted among the Roma, the single largest minority in Europe. As the decade of Roma inclusion (2005-2015) approaches its midpoint, many Rom feel anything but included.

Earlier this year, The OSCE’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) issued a joint call on governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society to intensify efforts in addressing racism and xenophobia. Among their specific recommendations was a call for political leaders and other public figures to speak out against all forms of violence motivated by racial hatred or xenophobia; an encouragement for governments to provide specific training to law enforcement personnel, prosecutors and the judiciary in order to enhance their effectiveness in dealing with racist, xenophobic and other hate crimes; a call for governments to cooperate closely with civil society in the monitoring of racist, xenophobic and other hate crimes, and intensify their efforts to collect data and statistics on such crimes and incidents; and a call for governments to ensure that victims of discrimination and hate crime have access to effective remedies to address grievances.

While these steps are important, for too many victims they come too late or have fallen on deaf ears. Recall the case of the horrific murder of Marwa el-Sherbini, a 32-year old pregnant Muslim woman from Egypt living in Germany who was stabbed to death in a Dresden courtroom in July. Her attacker was in court for insulting her in 2008, apparently because she was wearing the Muslim headscarf. Members of a neo-Nazi gang in St. Petersburg, Russia are on trial for a series of murders, including the slaying of an expert who was assisting authorities in investigations of attacks by similar groups. Among those targeted were foreigners from at least five countries. Members of a racist gang in Moscow were jailed last year for killing 18 foreigners over the course of a little more than a year.

Then there is the case of two-year old Natálka Sivkova who suffered burns on 80 percent of her body when an extremist group targeting Roma firebombed her home in the Czech Republic. In Hungary, five-year-old Rom, Robert Csorba and his father were riddled with bullets to prevent them from escaping their fire-bombed home.

Mr. Chairman, racist attacks such as these have become all too commonplace in the OSCE region, underscoring the need to redouble efforts to aggressively prosecute those responsible for such crimes even as we seek to promote tolerance and understanding. I look forward to hearing from the personal representatives on their contributions to these efforts.

Thank you.