



HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING

UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON
SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Testimony :: Rep. Alcee Hastings

Ranking Member - Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

“...frankly it is to protect the industry of the north from the competition of the cheap labor from the south and four million human lost jobs. Well it was four million n-word, but now we have twenty million Europeans who are the negros of Europe, twenty million young people are negros from Europe. We are treated like negros and we must destroy the minimum wage” - quote by MEP Janusz Korwin-Mikke, July 18 European Parliament debate on the minimum wage

This quote is from a public debate that took place last Wednesday in the European Parliament and a shameful example of the continuing prejudice in the OSCE region that makes today's hearing so necessary.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to welcome the Personal Representatives here today to not only discuss their work in Europe, but also the numerous issues impacting minority communities in our own country that they will be addressing during their official visit to the United States.

It is timely that your visit to assess tolerance and discrimination in the United States is taking place this month on the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act. A historic piece of legislation, the Civil Rights Act was signed into law July 2, 1964 by then President Lyndon B. Johnson to outlaw major forms of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, national origin and religion in areas ranging from voting to employment and education. Despite many advances, our country is still far from realizing the goals of that legislation.

Our Supreme Court recently reversed laws that have long protected minority voting. African-American, Latino, and Native Americans continue to experience disproportionately high unemployment, incarceration, and poverty rates. Moreover, according to the most recent government reports, African-Americans and migrants make up the bulk of hate crimes victims in this country. Images of a wave of children trying to cross the U.S. southern border – under the most desperate and dangerous circumstances – have been exploited to fuel already high levels of anti-migrant prejudice in some circles in this country. These are all issues that will be rightly reviewed by the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) this August when our country comes before the Committee.

The racial profiling of minorities, migrants, and Muslims in cities and at borders continues. Muslims, Sikhs, Jews and others continue to be targets of violence and hate as displayed by the tragic murders at Jewish centers in Kansas earlier this year - a testament to the need for

participating States to adopt a set of concrete measurable actions to combat anti-Semitism during this year's commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the landmark Berlin Conference. As one of the original members of this Commission to call for the OSCE to address the problem of anti-Semitism in the region, I cannot underscore enough the need to move beyond words to action to address the problem.

Increased physical attacks on Muslim women in concert with the European Human Rights Court's decision to uphold France's ban on face veils a measure directed against Muslim women - and efforts in several countries to adopt laws that would hamper the production of kosher and halal foods, have challenged the notion of welcoming cities for members of minority religions in several OSCE states.

Last year our Commission hosted events with both Romani and Black (African Descent) leaders from Europe who similarly requested assistance to address the unabated violence and continuing discrimination impacting their communities. A review of the OSCE's 2003 Roma Action Plan revealed that despite the passage of a decade, the situation of Europe's 15 million Roma had not drastically improved. Testimonies we heard last year from Black European leaders during the tenth anniversary of the OSCE's first racism conferences revealed similar findings. The ODIHR's Annual Hate Crimes Report and the EU Fundamental Rights Agencies findings that Roma and people of African descent are the greatest victims of violent hate crimes underscores the negative experiences of these communities.

The shameful use of anti-Black racist remarks during last week's parliamentary debate by the far-right Polish MEP underscores the need for more efforts in the OSCE region to combat racism generally and specific initiatives for people of African descent.

I reiterate earlier calls for a US led international anti-racism fund that could address issues of violence and discrimination faced by minorities and migrants and, for a global State Department office that focuses on issues of people of African descent to complement ongoing tailored State Department human rights efforts for women, religious freedom, anti-Semitism, Muslims, youth, the LGBT community, and the disabled. As the world begins preparations for the International Decade for People of African Descent beginning in 2015, it is imperative that specific initiatives be tailored to address anti-Black racism in my country and abroad in addition to generally strengthening global efforts to fight racial discrimination.

Additionally, the OSCE needs to adopt a proactive strategy to promote diversity and inclusive policies and practices in the region to meet 21st century demographic changes that are leading the entire region to be more racially, ethnically, religiously, and otherwise diverse. The OSCE could and should assist in the development of inclusive political leadership and counter recent election gains by political parties on prejudiced platforms.

I look forward to reading a final report of your country visit to the United States and follow up conversations to discuss how we might join efforts to combat discrimination in this country and throughout the OSCE region. Thank you.