

Further international cooperation and coordination required towards combating anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of racism and discrimination

**Press release on the "Coordination Meeting on Combating Anti-Muslim hatred" on 14-15 March, 2024**

On 14-15 March 2024, the Coordinators, Special Representatives, Envoy and Ambassadors on Combating Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination<sup>1</sup> met for the first time to discuss the global increase in reports of anti-Muslim hatred. This two-day meeting occurred in Strasbourg, on the occasion of the corresponding International Day, hosted by the Council of Europe and the European Commission. This meeting was a follow up to the "Joint Statement of the Coordinators, Special Representatives, Envoy and Ambassadors on Combating Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination" of 29 November 2023.

The participants met against the background of a global rise in anti-Muslim hatred both online and offline. Dehumanising language, polarisation, and disinformation have reached alarming levels worldwide with widespread discriminatory and racist narrative. Muslims and other groups continue to report threats, violence, harassment, intimidation and vandalism against religious spaces and community centres. Discrimination, racism and hatred are having a chilling effect on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly in the civic and online space. The meeting served to recall that extremism and radicalisation must be prevented and countered in all their forms, including violent extremism that targets Muslims and other groups.

The participants expressed their solidarity with those who feel discriminated and reaffirmed that hatred against Muslims, as all other forms of hatred and racism, is a threat to our pluralistic and democratic societies. Anti-Muslim hatred endangers societal cohesion and inclusion and a whole-of-society approach is key to combat it.

International instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, several UN Conventions protecting against discrimination, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union are crucial for the protection against all forms of racism and discrimination in our countries.

The participants concluded that:

- Civil society, education and media have a key role to play. No effort should be spared in enhancing and supporting our education systems, to educate younger generations on living together in democratic societies based on our shared values.
- The intersectional dimension of anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination operates on several grounds such as religion, national or ethnic origin and gender.

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<sup>1</sup> Participants at the meeting represented the following countries and organisations: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Council of Europe, European Commission, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United Nations, United States of America

- Muslim women and girls are at particular risk of violence, exclusion from education, employment, sport and culture, while they can be powerful agents of inclusion and mutual respect.
- Discrimination, hatred and racism against Muslims, Jews, Palestinians and Israelis are particularly alive and fuelled by current events in the Middle East.
- Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and no one should suffer any discrimination, hostility or violence because of their religious affiliation.
- There is a need for further international cooperation and coordination in combating all forms of hatred and discrimination against Muslims.

Today's Coordination Meeting demonstrated the determination of our governments and international organisations to combat anti-Muslim hatred in our societies and globally.