



American ideals. Universal values.

December 7, 2016

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

This year's meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) comes at a critical and perilous juncture for the organization and for Europe. As you prepare to represent the United States at this meeting, I urge you to publicly commit to further the work started during Germany's chairmanship to improve how states and civil society collaborate to fight antisemitism and intolerance in the OSCE region. The final weeks of the Obama Administration and the German chairmanship of the OSCE present an important opportunity to reinforce the values and commitments on which the OSCE was founded and cement recent gains in countering extremism, antisemitism, and xenophobia. I urge you to seize it.

The founding principle of the OSCE—that our collective peace and security is rooted in respect for human rights and equal opportunity for all—has never been more important, nor under such serious attack in many of the participating States.

Germany has led the region by accepting refugees and managing financial emergencies and political shakeups that threaten the OSCE's structure and democratic, inclusive vision. As Chairman in Office of the OSCE in 2016 Germany has prioritized combating antisemitism, xenophobia, and extremism; it has worked to increase the organization's capacity around these issues, including by providing funding and other support to civil society. I urge you to champion the United States' commitment to these issues by partnering with the German government to offer financial support to civil society. U.S. government leadership is crucial for continued success in these areas.

In Europe and the United States, hate crimes are on the rise along with public expressions of hatred fanned by extreme political forces. Immediately following the Brexit vote, fueled in part by xenophobia, there was a significant uptick in reported hate crimes in the United Kingdom. In the wake of the recent U.S. election, overt racism, antisemitism, and anti-Muslim bigotry have

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threatened minorities and immigrants. Germany has seen a drastic rise in hate crimes, particularly against migrants, and the rest of Europe is watching how it will deal with these challenges.

Against the backdrop of this outbreak of xenophobic and hate-filled rhetoric and violence on both sides of the Atlantic, Human Rights First and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) last week released our annual [report](#) analyzing hate crime data in the OSCE region. The [report](#) documents the failure of many OSCE participating States to uphold their commitments to record and prevent hate crimes. The current environment—a refugee crisis, ascendant far-right parties and movements espousing hatred, and a rise in bias-motivated incidents throughout the region—makes prevention, data collection, and reporting an urgent priority.

Human Rights First staff just returned from Germany and will soon release a report on xenophobia and extremism with recommendations for the U.S. and German governments to address challenges they share: rising intolerance and xenophobia, including antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Our recommendations include:

- The United States and Germany should work together to provide global leadership in the humane and effective management of the refugee crisis and in addressing xenophobia, violent extremism, and antisemitism. With support from the United States, the German government's ability to manage and integrate refugees and migrants in a way that is inclusive, safe, rights-respecting, and lawful, will restore confidence in its leadership. In public statements at the OSCE, the United States should commend Germany for its leadership in protecting and welcoming refugees.
- OSCE participating states should better address concerns of citizens and counter political fear-mongering strategies targeted at refugees and minorities. The United States and Germany should acknowledge the anxieties their populations may feel when confronting an influx of refugees, while at the same time making the argument, grounded in data, that welcoming refugees can present opportunities for local populations, in addition to being a humanitarian imperative.
- States of the OSCE should work to obtain additional data to inform policy, including studies to understand extremist attitudes. A greater focus on disaggregating data will allow policymakers to understand the root causes of extremism and craft tailored policy responses. As U.S. officials discuss issues of hate crimes with other OSCE States, they should encourage others to submit disaggregated data. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is an excellent resource for participating States as they strive to meet their data collection commitments. The United States should also continue to support ODIHR and its technical assistance functions.
- Prioritize diverse partnerships to combat hatred online. The U.S. government should help forge relationships between Germany, other governments, technology companies, and civil society to enable better partnerships with civil society in combating intolerance, misinformation, and extremism.

- Support the adoption at the Ministerial of a definition on antisemitism within the OSCE, encourage other States to do the same, and couple this with a call for countries to implement the definition to better address antisemitic and other hate crimes.

Thank you for your leadership in upholding the values of the OSCE. We hope that your final participation at the Ministerial Council will help assure worried allies that the United States is focused on protecting the rights of vulnerable citizens throughout the OSCE.

Very respectfully,



Elisa Massimino  
President and CEO

Cc: Ambassador Daniel Baer, U.S. Representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Ira Forman, Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism

Victoria Nuland, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs

Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor