



GLOBAL MINORITY RIGHTS NEWSLETTER

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SPECIAL RAPPOORTEUR ON MINORITY ISSUES

UN Special Rapporteur Urges States to Step Up their Efforts to Combat Intolerance, Discrimination and Violence against People Based on Religion or Belief

The United Nations General Assembly designated 22 August as the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. Its main purpose is to recall that States have the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights, including the human rights of persons belonging to religious minorities and their right to exercise their religion or belief freely.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Fernand de Varennes and other UN experts issued a statement noting that this day represents a great opportunity to raise awareness about religious intolerance, and violence and discrimination based on religion or belief.

“Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference

based on religion or belief which has the effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis would amount to religious intolerance and discrimination. This was made clear in the 1981 General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

We have observed violence in the name of religion around the world perpetrated by States and non-state groups leading to discrimination, persecution, arbitrary arrests or detention, enforced disappearances, sexual violence and killings of many people based on their religion



Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Minority Issues in Bangkok, Thailand is Organized by Special Rapporteur and Tom Lantos Institute

The first Asia-Pacific Regional Forum on Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities took place at Mahidol University in Bangkok, Thailand from 20-21 September, 2019. The Forum was organized by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on minority issues and the Tom Lantos Institute, in cooperation with IMADR, Mahidol University, the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies, and Forum-Asia. Discussions were structured around three main key issue areas related to education in and of minority languages. These included 1) human rights pertaining to minority language education; 2) public policy objectives and practices for education in minority languages; and 3) effective practices in education in and teaching of minority languages, including resources and management for effective implementation.

The Forum was attended by approximately 70 participants representing governments, United Nations mechanisms, bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations and mechanisms in the field of human rights, academics and experts on minority issues, civil society representatives, and minority groups. This wide range of stakeholders used this platform to share their knowledge and experience in the area of minority language education. Working groups on the three key issue areas developed draft recommendations that provide Asian regional insight on the topic, and will serve as the basis for the development of recommendations related to minority language education ahead of the 12th United Nations Forum on Minority Issues to be held in Geneva in November.

Special Rapporteur, Fernand de Varennes, found the specific and coherent recommendations on all themes of the forum very useful. He emphasized that language rights are human rights and that languages are not a threat, but they enrich societies and create diverse environments we should all value. The documentation from the Asia-Pacific Regional Forum will be posted on www.minorityforum.info as it becomes available.

or belief. Victims have included religious minorities, individuals who are not religious, LGBTI persons, children and women who face many forms of discrimination and gender-based violence. Such violence threatens the hard-fought progress in securing women's equality and the rights of LGBTI persons.

We stress that religion or belief should never be used to justify discrimination. When faced with religious persecution or discrimination, victims are often also deprived of their right to participate fully in political, economic and cultural life, as well as their rights to education and to health. This can include the desecration and destruction of numerous cultural heritage sites of rich historic and religious value, such as places of worship and cemeteries.”

More information about the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief can be found on the UN's Homepage. The Statement itself can be found on the OHCHR's homepage.

UN Special Rapporteur and Other UN Experts Express Their Concern Over the Risk of Statelessness for Millions and Instability in Assam, India

Concerned over the ongoing update of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, India, and its potential to harm millions of people, most of whom belong to minorities, the UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and other UN experts issued a joint statement. The National Register is a register containing names and other data required for identification of all Indian citizens. It is now being updated for the first time since 1951. In order to be included in the register, people in Assam must prove that they or their ancestors were born in Assam before March 25, 1971. Those excluded from the register may be referred to the Foreigners' Tribunals in Assam, where they would have to prove that they are not "irregular foreigners". It remains uncertain what will happen to the people excluded from the register. UN experts expressed concern that the process might lead to statelessness, deportation or prolonged detention.

"In nationality determination processes, the burden of proof should lie with the State and not with the individual. It is regrettable that the deadline for the publication of the final NRC list remains the 31 July 2019, despite the significant number of pending revision claims and objections, the complex NRC modalities, uncertainties about the membership of Foreign Tribunals and their procedures, as well as the reported inconsistencies and errors," criticized the experts in their joint statement. They also addressed the rise of hate speech directed towards minorities in Assam and the risks caused by their marginalization.

The Statement can be found on the website of the OHCHR.

UN Special Rapporteur and Other UN Experts Address the New Bangladeshi Restrictions On Rohingya Refugees

UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues and other UN experts expressed their concern about the situation in Bangladeshi Rohingya refugee camps. They were addressing the new restrictions imposed by the Bangladeshi authorities following massive protests last months. Mobile phones have been banned from the refugee camps and confiscated, a curfew is being strictly enforced, NGOs and private persons organizing the protests have been subjected to intimidation.

The UN experts said in their statement on 16 September 2019: "We are alarmed by the sudden crackdown of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and are seriously concerned, not only that these restrictions have been applied in a discriminatory manner against members of the Rohingya minority, who are refugees in Bangladesh, but also that curfews and communications shutdowns could facilitate further serious human rights abuses against them." The experts also addressed increasing tensions between the local population and Rohingya refugees.

The complete statement is available at the website of the OHCHR.

Hate Speech Has Become Mainstream in All Different Political Systems, UN Experts Warn

On 23 September 2019, UN experts including the Special Rapporteur on minority issues published an open letter about the worrying increase of hate speech, both offline and online.

"We are gravely concerned that leaders, senior government officials, politicians and other prominent figures spread fear among the public against migrants or those seen as "the others", for their own political gain. The demonization of entire groups of people as dangerous or inferior is not new to human history; it has led to catastrophic tragedies in the past. Around the world, we observe that



Human rights are interconnected and interrelated, and the challenges faced by deaf people worldwide demand coordinated actions based on comprehensive advocacy frameworks...

public figures are attempting to stoke ethnic tensions and violence by spreading hate speech targeting the vulnerable. Such rhetoric aims to dehumanize minority groups and other targeted people, and, in the case of migrants, fosters discriminatory discourse about who “deserves” to be part of a community. Furthermore, hateful calls for the suppression of non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities and a limitation of the human rights of LGBT people limit progress towards the eradication of violence and discrimination against LGBT persons in various countries around the world, and a number of discriminatory legal and policy initiatives have been put forward.

The rhetoric of hatred must be countered, as it has real-life consequences. Studies have established a correlation

between exposure to hate speech and the number of hate crimes committed. To curb xenophobic attacks on migrants and prevent incitement to discrimination, hatred, hostility and violence against other marginalised groups, we call on public officials and politicians, as well as the media, to assume their collective responsibility to promote societies that are tolerant and inclusive. To achieve this, they must refrain from any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. They should also denounce swiftly those who incite hatred against migrants, minorities, or other vulnerable groups,” they said.

The complete letter is available online on the website of the OHCHR.

States Should Recognize Deaf People as Members of Linguistic Minorities, UN Special Rapporteur Says

On the occasion of the International Day of Sign Languages, the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues delivered a statement to underline that the users of sign languages have the same human rights and freedoms as members of other linguistic minorities. The main theme of this year’s International Day of Sign Languages was “Sign Language Rights for All!”. It was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly to recognize the importance of preserving sign languages as part of linguistic and cultural diversity.

“There are some 72 million deaf people worldwide, according to the World Federation of the Deaf.

States should undertake concrete legislative, institutional and policy measures to ensure they are recognized as users of fully-fledged minority languages

and that their rights as members of linguistic minorities are protected and promoted without discrimination and in accordance with all relevant international human rights standards.

Human rights are interconnected and interrelated, and the challenges faced by deaf people worldwide demand coordinated actions based on comprehensive advocacy frameworks that build on the State commitments under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the international framework on the human rights of minorities, including the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities,” stated the Special Rapporteur.

More information can be found on the OHCHR’s homepage.

OTHER

UNITED NATIONS

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International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples: Endangered Indigenous Languages in Focus of UN Experts

9 August, 2019 marked the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, aimed at raising awareness of the needs of the estimated 370 million indigenous people around the world. This year's focus was on indigenous languages. The observance took place in the ECOSOC Chamber at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA and began with a ceremonial call to order by Chief Howard Thompson, and included a panel on the International Year of Indigenous Languages, interactive dialogue, and an innovation hub on indigenous languages.

United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, sent a message in which he underscored the value of languages in relation to cultures, histories and identities, and highlighted the efforts of the United Nations to realize the rights and aspirations of indigenous peoples.

In observance of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, stated that "the United Nations and UNESCO are committed to protecting the rights of indigenous peoples, and to enabling them to participate fully and equally at national and international levels. In line with Agenda 2030, which recognizes indigenous peoples as a distinct group and acknowledges the role it must play in global efforts to build a better future for all, the 2018 UNESCO policy on Engaging with Indigenous Peoples guides the Organization's work and ensures that its policies, planning, programming and implementation uphold the United

Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples."

UN experts, including the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, stated that "Indigenous languages are necessary for the enjoyment of human rights, as well as being a part of the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of indigenous peoples". However, they warned that forty percent of the approximately 7,000 indigenous languages around the world are in danger of disappearing.

More information on the Day of the World's indigenous Peoples can be found on the UN's website.

UNESCO Hosts International Workshop to Train Policy-Makers to Address Antisemitism

On 10-11 July, 2019, UNESCO, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the World Jewish Congress hosted the "International Workshop on Addressing Antisemitism in and Through Education" in Paris, France. Government officials and stakeholders in the field of education from 27 countries participated in the workshop, which is part of the OSCE/ODIHR project "Turning Words into Action to Address Anti-Semitism".



The workshop focused on imparting skills and knowledge to participants on how to face antisemitism and other forms of extremism, and included a round table discussion with the theme “Why is it important to address antisemitism globally?”. In addition, the participants visited the Memorial de la Shoah and met the Franco-German journalist Beate Klarsfeld, and the French historian and lawyer Serge Klarsfeld, both of whom are UNESCO Honorary Ambassadors.

UNESCO also published a statement entitled “Addressing contemporary antisemitism: A global issue?” in which it emphasizes that antisemitism is still widespread and poses a threat to all countries. In the statement, UNESCO also highlighted that it “promotes education systems that address antisemitism in and through education and build the resilience of young people to extremist ideologies and prejudice.”

More information about the Workshop is available on UNESCO’s website.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, Praises New Canadian Bill Recognizing Rights of Indigenous Women

Until August 2019, according to the Canadian Indian Act, First Nation women in Canada were not considered to be indigenous anymore if they married non-indigenous men. Men who married non-indigenous women, on the other hand, kept their status. With the entry into force of the S-3 Bill on 15 August, 2019, these provisions were amended, so that First Nation men and women will be treated equal.

United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, recently made a statement welcoming the removal of the law perpetuating gender-based discrimination as an important step towards gender equality. Already in April 2018, she had requested the Canadian Government to abolish remaining gender-discriminating laws. Her newest statement is available on the website of the OHCHR.



42nd Session of the Human Rights Council

After finishing its 41st Session on 12 July, 2019, the Human Rights Council held its 42nd Session from 9 to 27 September, 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland. During the session, more than 90 human rights reports were discussed.

The Session placed a special focus on the rights of indigenous peoples. The Council's half-day panel discussion on 18 September was devoted to the promotion and preservation of indigenous languages. The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli Corpuz, presented her Report on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The report summarizes the activities of the Special Rapporteur and provides a thematic study on the experiences of indigenous peoples with justice.

In her opening statement, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, emphasized the importance of the relationship between opposing climate change and advocating for human rights. "Effective climate adaptation measures will be those which empower women; indigenous peoples; and others who live in vulnerable areas, who are often members of marginalized and discriminated communities. This requires Governments to recognize the structural factors, which deepen these communities' climate vulnerability; involve them in seeking solutions; and dedicate resources to upholding their rights, including equitable and improved access to social protection and a just transition towards greener jobs," she stated.

More information about the Sessions of the Human Rights Council can be found on its website.

99th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination held its 99th session from 5 to 29 August, 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland. The Committee reviewed reports received from Czech Republic, El Salvador, Iceland, Mexico, Mongolia, Poland and the State of Palestine. Several human rights NGOs submitted parallel reports, including the European Roma Rights Centre, the Mexican Human Rights Network, and the Mongolian Human Rights NGO Forum, which help to provide the Committee with a more complete picture of the situation in each country.

Ibrahim Salama, Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, said in his opening statement "that the Committee continued to face great challenges, as it was confronted with the many manifestations of racial discrimination that were often rooted in racial stereotypes and resulted in racist hate, xenophobia, racism and intolerance in all parts of the world. The Committee had been largely an actor of the United Nations' tireless mobilization against hatreds of all kinds, as it had tirelessly worked to assist states parties to counter racial discrimination and defend victims."

On 5 August, 2019, the Committee adopted its 2019 annual report, which will be available on the Committee's webpage in the coming weeks. The 100th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination will be held from 25 November to 3 December 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland. Then, the Committee will review the reports of Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Ireland, Israel and Uzbekistan. The documents of the 99th Session are available on the OHCHR's homepage.

Effective climate change adaptation measures will be those which empower women; indigenous peoples; and others who live in vulnerable areas, who are often members of marginalized and discriminated communities.

12th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, composed of seven independent experts on the rights of indigenous peoples, held its 12th session in Geneva, Switzerland. From 15 to 19 July, 2019, the experts discussed several themes related to the protection and support of indigenous communities. Among the main issues were indigenous peoples' rights in the context of borders, migration and displacement, and indigenous women in power.

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, submitted a statement in which she said: "Meaningful reconciliation must also include steps to ensure the non-recurrence of violations. This is essential for building trust and restoring confidence in the State. Indeed, it is difficult to envision true healing by indigenous

peoples in an environment in which violations continue to occur. As observed in my report to the Human Rights Council last year on criminalization and violence against indigenous peoples, abuses are still happening across the globe. To end these violations, it is essential to address their underlying causes, which are very often connected to the historic dispossession and discrimination suffered by indigenous peoples. A framework of recognition, redress and reconciliation needs to be based on ensuring the non-repetition of human rights violations.

Justice is an essential component of truth, reparation and reconciliation processes. I will devote my thematic report to the Human Rights Council this year to the issue of indigenous peoples and justice, considering the two main aspects of this topic: recognition of indigenous justice systems and access to justice for indigenous peoples, including in the context of post-conflict and transitional justice."

More information can be found on the OHCHR's website.



REGIONAL

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Round Table on Hate Speech in Malaysia

A round table on “Freedom of Expression, Hate Speech and Internet Regulation in Malaysia” took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 5 July, 2019. It was organized by ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, together with the Rights and Gender Equality Special Select Committee of the Malaysian Parliament, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia and the International Center for Not-for profit Law. ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights is a human rights intervention force of current and former parliamentarians who support the work of civil society and human rights defenders.

The event was attended by nearly 20 Members of Government, government officials and key civil society organizations. The main issues were the connections between hate speech prevention and internet regulation and the participant’s experiences as victims of hate speech. Malaysia’s long and complicated history between opposing hate speech and restricting and criminalizing free speech was discussed and used as an example for the essential meaning of freedom of expression for democratic progress.

On 9 July, 2019, Malaysian parliamentarians stated that the event “provided an opportunity for Members of Parliament and key stakeholders from civil society to assess the progress of the government’s reform agenda and identify steps forward to further promote the right to freedom of expression along with addressing challenges caused by hate speech.”

“As parliamentarians we have a unique role to play in combating hate speech and disinformation. We can use our influence and public stature to promote mutual respect and

understanding towards others,” said Kasthuri Patto, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights Member and Malaysian Member of Parliament, a victim of hate speech herself.

More information about the event can be found on the homepage of ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights.

Tuol Sleng Conference on Genocide, Memory and Peace in Cambodia

From 27 to 31 August, 2019, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, the Korea International Cooperation Agency, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of Cambodia and UNESCO, organized a Conference on Genocide, Memory and Peace, which took place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The conference was held in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the end of the Khmer Rouge regime. Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum is the memorial site of the Security Prison 21 interrogation and detention center of the Khmer Rouge regime, where an estimated 20,000 people were imprisoned between 1976 and 1979.

Over 150 national and international participants attended the conference. The goal of the conference was to facilitate the exchange of experiences related to the management of genocide-related archives. There was a special focus on ethical questions that accompany digitization projects expanding the accessibility of archives. The conference was organized as part of the “Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives Preservation and Digitization Project”, implemented by UNESCO in partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts of Cambodia, and with support from the Korea International Cooperation Agency. More Information can be found on UNESCO’s website.



African Union Representatives Express Intention to Oppose Forced Displacement

During a quarterly update session on the African Union's thematic focus for 2019, "The Year for Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa", members of the African Union Permanent Representative Committee, donors and partner agencies reaffirmed their commitment to finding solutions to the widespread problem of forced displacement in Africa, an issue that disproportionately affects minorities and indigenous groups in Africa.

"We need your skills and expertise to find durable solutions to forced displacement. We need more of you to get involved and we can do more together," stated H.E. Minata Samate Cessouma, African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs. According to UN figures, Africa hosts 17.8 million internally displaced persons, which is more than a third of the world's population of forcibly displaced people.

The original press release can be found on the African Union's homepage.

Raja Nicola, Member of the Coptic Christian Minority, Appointed as Member of Sudan's Sovereignty Council

On 21 August, 2019, members of the Sovereignty Council of Sudan, the country's collective head of state, swore their oaths. The council is comprised of five military representatives and six civilians, and is tasked with governing Sudan for approximately three years until elections are held.

The appointment of Raja Nicola, one of two women in the council and a representative of the Coptic Christian minority, can be considered an important symbolic step forward in the aftermath of the regime of Omar al-Bashir. Nicola is a former judge and a member of one of Sudan's religious minority communities. "This is a new phase of Sudan's history. With the nomination of this lady, Sudan is respecting diversity – Muslims, Christians, non-religious – they're all Sudanese components and have a right to participate," Farah Ibrahim Mohamed Alagar, chair of the Blue Nile Forum, said.

More information about this development can be found on middleeasteye.net and aljazeera.com.

OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities Visits Moscow and Kazan

Lamberto Zannier, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, visited the Russian cities of Moscow and Kazan from 22 to 26 July, 2019. His visit was focused on minority issues in Russia, and in particular on the situation in the Republic of Tatarstan, which is one of the most populous and culturally diverse regions in Russia.

“Tatarstan has a long tradition of promoting constructive and harmonious relations between the different peoples living in the region. It is important that changes in language and education policy at the federal level take its specific situation into account, including regarding the teaching of the Tatar language”, the High Commissioner stated.

In Moscow, the High Commissioner met with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and several committees of the State Duma. In Kazan, he met the Chairperson of the State Council and Republican authorities Farid Mukhametshin.

More information on the High Commissioner’s visit can be found on the website of the OSCE.

There is no place in our modern European societies and political discourse for the dehumanization of the Roma or any other minority groups.

European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day

2 August was declared European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day by the Parliament of Europe in 2015. The date was chosen to remember the death of approximately 3,000 Roma men, women and children in the gas chambers of Auschwitz in 1944. Overall, approximately 500,000 Roma were murdered under the Nazi regime.

Commemoration ceremonies took place at Auschwitz-Birkenau and in Strasbourg, France. More than 1,500 Roma people from all over the world took part in the commemoration ceremony at Auschwitz. The side-event, “Dikh he na bister” (Look and don’t forget), organized by the Roma Genocide Remembrance Initiative was visited by over 500 young Roma and non-Roma people. The Strasbourg event was organized by the Council of Europe and was held in front of its headquarters at the Palais de l’Europe.

Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe issued a statement, saying: “This is a terrible milestone in our history. But for a long time, little attention was paid in Europe to the Roma Holocaust. This was deeply wrong. We must remember. We do this to pay our respect to the victims of course, mindful of the generations that have been lost – and of the contributions that those people would have made to European life. But we also remember because it is our duty to ensure that such things can never happen again: Today, extreme movements and parties have gained strength in some parts of Europe. Anti-Roma hate speech is widespread, creeping on occasion into mainstream political discourse, and feeding the mentality that leads to hate crime. This must not go unchecked.”

First Vice-President of the European Commission Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová issued a joint statement: “There is no place in our modern European societies and political discourse for the dehumanization of the Roma or any other minority groups. The atrocities of the past stand as a reminder that equality and non-discrimination are values which cannot be taken as given: upholding them requires our constant attention and readiness to challenge those who would attack them.”

More information on the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day can be found on the homepage of the European Commission and on <http://2august.eu/>.

International Conference: “Is Auschwitz Only Sleeping? Sinti and Roma Narratives after the Holocaust”

On July 31 and August 1 2019, the conference, “Is Auschwitz Only Sleeping? Sinti and Roma Narratives after the Holocaust” was held at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow. It was organized by the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma, the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, and the ternYpe International Roma Youth Network. The conference was attended by political representatives and activists, artists, academics and several hundred teenagers, the latter participating in the youth event ‘Dikh he na Bister’.

The conference focused on four issues: (1) Representation of Roma memory in arts and culture, (2) Roma historical narratives about the Holocaust, (3) Spaces of memory and representation of the Romani experience, and (4) Romani civil rights struggle for recognition and against antigypsyism. To build bridges between science, politics and arts, the exhibition ‘TEARS OF GOLD / SOWNAKUNE JASFA’ was held simultaneously.

More information about the conference can be found on the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture’s homepage.

Final Report on the Implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies

The European Commission updated its Report on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies. It evaluates the successes and developments of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (in the fields of education, employment, health, and housing) and efforts to oppose discrimination and antigypsyism.

The report summarizes the measures taken pursuant to the Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in four policy areas: education, employment, health and housing. The second part of the report focuses on the efforts to fight discrimination and

antigypsyism. It includes statistical data and examples of promising approaches in several countries.

“Now, 90% of Roma children attend primary and lower secondary school. This is an encouraging step towards promoting integration of the Roma in society. Still, a lot remains to be done to help Roma integrate fully in society, in particular on access to public utilities, decent housing, employment and healthcare”, stated Vera Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality.

The report can be found online on the website of the European Commission.

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Published 2nd Quarterly Activity Report 2019

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović, summarized her activities from 1 April to 30 June, 2019 and presented her report to the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council. In particular, the report followed up on her visits, reports, meetings and missions related to the different areas of her mandate, such as freedom of assembly, the human rights of immigrants, or children’s rights.

In relation to minority groups, she highlighted her

engagement for the rights of Roma and against the continuous human rights violations targeting them, such as such as racially motivated attacks, forced evictions, and school and housing segregation. On 25 June, 2019, she met with the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and informed the Committee about her work for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

The report is available on the Council of Europe’s website.



Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities Receives 5th Report on the Czech Republic and Publishes the 3rd Opinions on the Netherlands and Georgia

The Council of Europe Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities received the 5th State Report of the Czech Republic on 10 July, 2019. The Czech Republic summarized its efforts to protect its 14 national minorities, including activities of the Government Council for Roma Minority Affairs, a training for Czech Police on national minorities, and the 2015/2016 reform of the educational system in relation to Roma children.

On 5 September, 2019, the Committee published its 3rd Opinions on the Netherlands and Georgia. Regarding the Netherlands, the Committee pointed out the high standard

of protection of the rights of the Frisian national minority, but it expressed concern over the discrimination faced by Roma, Sinti, and Travelers in many areas of life. Regarding Georgia, the Committee commended the strengthening of the legislative framework aimed at promoting minority rights in Georgia, including the adoption of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in 2014 and of the Law on State Language in 2015. However, the Committee criticized the fact that religious minorities still face structural discrimination.

The Report and the Opinions can be found on the Council of Europe's website.

EU Fundamental Rights Agency Report: “Young Jewish Europeans: perceptions and experiences of antisemitism”

In July 2019, the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency published their report: “Young Jewish Europeans: perceptions and experiences of antisemitism”. It uses data collected in the 2018 survey “Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism”, in which over 2,700 Jews aged 16–34 took part.

The report focuses on four issues: (1) Who are young Jewish Europeans, (2) Defining antisemitism and understanding the place of Israel in it, (3) Perceptions and experiences of antisemitism among young Jewish Europeans, and (4) Living with fear and the need for effective government action. Michael O’Flaherty, Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, emphasized in his foreword that some of the study’s results are indeed worrying, such as the fact that 44% of the young Jews surveyed stated that they were targeted by antisemitism in the past year, and that more than 80% consider antisemitism to be a problem in their country.

The report is available on the Fundamental Rights Agency’s homepage.

Fundamental Rights Agency’s Antisemitism Survey Dataset Now Available

The European Union Fundamental Rights Agency published the dataset of their second antisemitism survey on 2 July, 2019. It contains data about the perceived amount of antisemitism, manifested through hate speech, hate crimes, discrimination, or in other forms. The survey was carried out in 12 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom between May and June 2018.

The dataset can be found on [GESIS.org](https://www.gesis.org).

173rd Period of Sessions of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights held its 173rd Period of Sessions from 23 September, 2019 to 2 October, 2019. The following public hearings were held in conjunction with the period of sessions: (1) “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada”, (2) “Environmental Protection in the Amazon and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Brazil”, and (3) “Judicial Protection of Victims of Terrorist Acts Inspired by Hate Speech”.

The Commission also dealt with several cases of violence against Garifuna women in Honduras. During September, four of them were murdered. The Commission urged the State of Honduras to take immediate and urgent measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute, punish and repair these acts of violence. “Women human rights defenders continually face the rejection of their participation in public life and their leadership in the defense of human rights, their territories and their traditions. Using sexist and racist stereotypes, these people or groups seek to delegitimize their work and prevent the fundamental work they have in their communities,” said Commissioner Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, President of the Commission.

The hearings are public and may be attended by anyone interested. More information about the Session of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights can be found on the homepage of the OAS.



Forum on Globalization and the Preservation of Indigenous Languages and Cultures Held during the 2nd Inter-American Week for Indigenous Peoples

From August 5 to 9, 2019, the Organization of American States celebrated the Inter-American Week for Indigenous People, which focused on the theme “Indigenous Languages of the Americas”. During this week, several cultural events took place to highlight the cultural diversity, traditions, languages, and contributions of indigenous peoples of the region. This included a tour of the National Museum of the American Indian and a joint meeting of the Permanent Council and the Inter-American Council for Integral Development.

On 8 August, 2019, the Forum “Globalization and the Preservation of Indigenous Languages and Cultures: the Role of Youth & Technology” was held at the Hall of the Americas at the OAS headquarters in Washington. Both prominent representatives of several indigenous communities and state representatives participated in multiple panel discussions. Among the invited experts were Luis Felipe Duchicela, Senior Advisor for Indigenous Peoples’ Issues, U.S. Agency for International Development, Mary S. Linn, Curator of Cultural and Linguistic Revitalization,

Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and Miguel G. Vilar, Senior Program Officer, National Geographic.

Nestor Mendez, D.C. Assistant Secretary General, said in his speech: “The declaration by the United Nations of 2019 as the year of indigenous languages demands a special focus on how national efforts, combined with those of civic actors and international organizations, can spur urgent action for their revitalization, promotion and preservation, and spark renewed interest in cementing their value-added as catalysts for strengthening cultural retention and the on-passing of traditional knowledge. In recognizing the importance of indigenous languages as critical assets to communities, the United Nations underscores their utility as tools not just for development, but more consequentially for long term, sustainable development, as well as in the protection of human rights, in peace building and in the search for reconciliation.”

Further information on the Forum and the 2nd Inter-American Week for Indigenous Peoples can be found on the OAS website.

Workshop “Mobilizing Indigenous and Local Knowledge Solutions: Addressing Climate Impacts and Vulnerabilities” Held in the Caribbean

In Georgetown, Guyana, UNESCO sponsored a regional workshop dedicated to the experiences of indigenous communities with the effects of ongoing climate change. From 3 to 5 September, 2019, indigenous and local community experts were brought together with climate and meteorological services experts to understand how local communities respond to extreme weather events and how their resources can be best mobilized to oppose climate change.

During the workshop, the concrete examples of the

Upper Mazarun region of Guyana and Cuban indigenous communities and their skills in identifying anthropomorphical, hydrological and biological indicators to improve agriculture were examined. Other main issues discussed included case studies of risk reduction, boosting ecosystem resilience, coping and recovery strategies, and stakeholder partnerships in support of indigenous knowledge in climate change policy.

More information about the workshops are available online on UNESCO’s homepage.

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UPCOMING

EVENTS

10-11 October, 2019

Strasbourg, France

8th meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller Civil Society

21 October – 10 November, 2019

Banjul, Gambia

65th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

23-24 October, 2019

Dakar, Senegal

Regional Meeting for Africa on the International Decade for People of African Descent

22-25 October, 2019

Lviv, Ukraine

Training Event on Human Rights Monitoring and Reporting Addressed to Roma Human Rights Defenders

28-29 October, 2019

Tunis, Tunisia

Africa-Middle East Regional Forum on Education, Language, and the Human Rights of Minorities

4-15 November, 2019

Geneva, Switzerland

34th UPR Session

6-7 November, 2019

Quito, Ecuador

3rd Forum of the Inter-American Human Rights System

8-14 November, 2019

Quito, Ecuador

174th Period of Sessions of the OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

25 November – 13 December, 2019

Geneva, Switzerland

100th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

28-29 November, 2019

Geneva, Switzerland

12th Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

The Tom Lantos Institute (TLI) is an independent human and minority rights organisation with a particular focus on Jewish and Roma communities, and on Hungarian and other ethnic or national, linguistic and religious minorities. It is a Budapest-based organisation with a multi-party Board of Trustees, an international Executive Committee, and Advisory Board. TLI operates internationally in terms of scope, funding, staff and partners. As a research and education platform, TLI aims to bridge the gaps between research and policy, norms and practice. TLI focuses on human rights and identity issues in general, and also works on three specific issue areas. These include: Jewish life and antisemitism; Roma rights and citizenship; and Hungarian minorities.

CONTACT US

The Global Minority Rights Newsletter is a publication of the Tom Lantos Institute that gathers recent information about normative developments, events, and other opportunities related to the institutional frameworks and mechanisms for the protection of the human rights of minorities.

The Newsletter is published quarterly and is available in electronic format.

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