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Universal Periodic Review

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 August 2012]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

United Kingdom UPR

Human trafficking in the UK

Human Trafficking is the fastest growing criminal activity in the world. The United Kingdom is a destination and, to a lesser extent, transit country for women, children, and men trafficked for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Some victims, including minors from the UK, are also trafficked within the country. Migrant workers are trafficked to the UK for forced labor in agriculture, construction, food processing, domestic servitude, and food service. Women made up almost three quarters of the suspected victims - and half of all the cases related to allegations of sexual exploitation. The other half all related to forced labor.

While the UK government stipulates that victims are not inappropriately incarcerated, fined or penalized for unlawful acts as a direct result of being trafficked, some victims reportedly have been charged and prosecuted for immigration offences. One victim who managed to escape from her trafficker during the reporting period was repeatedly imprisoned on immigration violations, according to media sources. The UK provides foreign victims with legal alternatives to their removal to countries where they face hardship or retribution. This process continues to be cumbersome and inconsistent for victims seeking such alternatives. By filing asylum, humanitarian protection or extraordinary relief claims on a case-by-case basis, such victims may obtain residency.

In the business of slavery, there are cases of child human trafficking, within the UK, where victims have been rescued from slavery only to go missing from UK care systems. It is believed that in such cases victims are tracked down by their traffickers and rarely resurface.

Minority Rights and Islamophobia

Recent years have witnessed incidents of hatred or irrational fear of Islam and Muslims. Islamophobia has led to the practice of discrimination against Muslims by excluding them from the economic, social, and public life of the nation. It includes the perception that Islam has no values in common with other cultures, is inferior to the West and is a violent political ideology rather than a religion.

A perceived trend of Islamophobia has been recognized by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence. Particularly, ignorance of governments to pay more attention to this form of intolerance is the ruling sentiment across nations with Muslim minorities.

Recommendations

ODVV commends the United Kingdom on its implementation of recommendations from the first UPR cycle, and offers the following recommendations:

- We are concerned regarding the impact of the current austerity measures imposed by the United Kingdom Government, which will unfairly affect vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the impoverished, as well as university students concerning their unduly increased tuition fees. ODVV wants the United Kingdom to publish the policies made particularly regarding the rights of the vulnerable.
- We suggest the British Government publish as soon as possible a report concerning its Commission on a Bill of Rights on how the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is protecting and extending British liberties.
- ODVV welcomes the United Kingdom Government's work to tackle human trafficking. It urges the United Kingdom to continue to address this issue. Some

measures as temporary residence permits have been taken by the UK government, which are granted on the condition that the victims cooperate with law enforcement authorities. ODVV further urges the UK government to provide a report of the tangible results of the Government's action plan around violence against women and girls, and explain the type of help, legal redress and compensation that is available to them. We request information on measures used to strengthen efforts to combat human trafficking.

- ODVV calls on the United Kingdom to ensure that effective measures are in place to allow for quick and accurate identification of trafficked victims, drawing attention to incidents where victims have been identified as irregular migrants. In such cases, victims are often deported and therefore unable to seek redress. When a safe return to the country of origin was not guaranteed victims must be offered temporary or permanent residence permits.
- ODVV wants to know measures taken to provide protection for overseas domestic workers from abuse. We are concerned with the existence of discrimination migrant workers and increased cases of racist incidents. ODVV wants to know the United Kingdom's practices in tackling hate crimes and in interfaith dialogue. We are also concerned with the United Kingdom's position towards the ICRMW and ILO Convention No. 143 on Migration in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers.
- ODVV urges the UK government to ensure that adequate procedures are in place to enable quick and accurate identification of trafficked persons to prevent any misidentification of trafficked persons as irregular migrants, which often leads to detention and deportation, effectively precluding a chance to seek compensation.
- We urge the United Kingdom to ensure that trafficked persons are equipped with access to information, free legal aid and other necessary assistance such as interpretation services, and regular residence status during the duration of any legal proceedings.
- We are concerned with the existence of discrimination against Muslims and urge the United Kingdom to intensify its efforts to promote multiculturalism at all levels.
- ODVV calls for the UK Government to introduce general anti-discrimination laws. Future policies must ensure they do not undermine the trust Muslim communities have in state institutions nor their sense of belonging in Britain.
- ODVV calls all people of faith to "challenge Islamophobia". People from all sections of the societies have a crucial role to play in helping to dispel myths about Muslim communities. There is a common misconception that Islam is a religion of Violence. There is no basis for this in Islam. Islam is a religion of peace. Accordingly, ODVV invites nations to improve understanding among all Abrahamic faiths and cultures and avoid incitement to hatred and violence, in order to reach a world of peace and security.
- We are also alarmed by reports indicating the United Kingdom's complicity in the secret detention of persons as well as torture and punishment in detention facilities in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Given the above, the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence urges the United Kingdom to continue to remain committed to its national, regional and international commitments.