

G20 Interfaith Fellows and Youth Forum – 8 October 2020

Topic 1

Conflict Prevention and peacebuilding

Introduction

Hate speech

Every violent act, war or attack start with a mouth word.

We have indicated in discussions some root causes and good responses to hate speech.

Highlighting that efforts have not been exerted within governmental bodies or other institutions. A number of institutions such as universities and schools have been very active in sponsoring initiatives to support better response towards hate speech.

The following recommendations address the subtopic of hate speech, whilst the subtopics of social media and protection of sacred sites are considered to be affected by hate speech as well.

(what applies for addressing hate speech applies for the protection of sacred sites).

I. Law Enforcement – While balancing the need for Free Speech versus Hateful Rhetoric, there's a need for governments to implement 'zero tolerance' laws against hate speech.

II. Education – In order to affect behavioural change, educational reform at the higher level of university and adult education, as well as at the primary and secondary school levels, needs to be implemented. Multi-faith curriculums and diversity training need to be made widely available. This involves providing more religiously literate resources and to pursuing areas like digital channels and protecting against cyber bullying.

III. Addressing the Root Cause – The rise in populism and extreme-right hate and violence throughout Europe and the USA is an indicator that Hate Speech has deeper roots than just xenophobia. An increasing sense of injustice and inequalities is a root cause that needs to be more openly explored and dialogued with.

Social Media

I. Universal Declaration of Ending the Proliferation of Hate Speech – world governments must draft an agreement to define online hate speech and to make it illegal. Companies that provide platforms allowing hate speech to proliferate need to be held accountable, morally and financially. Techniques like track & trace, counteracting and de-platforming must be bolstered by more support staff and monitoring.

II. Counter-Narrative – Working together within Civil Society with NGOs, FBOs and other entities to promote counter narratives to hate speech. Funding and supporting cooperation with groups already working in this field is part of the proposal.

Protection of sacred sites

The protection of sacred sites can be held in two different ways:

A physical protection, organized either by the state and/or the community, with support of the State.

A physical protection organized by the State, as we can find for instance in the UK or in France, where the army or the police protects the buildings and their surroundings during the Holidays.

A community protection, like the Community security trust in the UK or the SPCJ in France, with funding from the government, in order to have community members keeping the building and its surroundings when events and festivals are held. In this regard, we would like to pay honour to Dan Uzan, who paid with his life the protection of the Synagogue in Copenhagen, Denmark, when he prevented a terror attack to be held during a ceremony. To go further, the State could plan and help to organize in each region - or locally, depending of the State – and with State funding, a security training for volunteers that comprehends all the Sacred sites; that would promote and train “multifaith volunteers of good will” who would go and protect Sacred sites, no matter the religion. That way, they can learn from each other while guarding the sites, and show the different communities that you can care and take care of everyone, as a Human being.

An open-minded protection, as we believe knowledge is the best long-term protection against hatred.

Organize at the State level “open days” to visit the places of worship. It can be like in the UK “Visit my holy place”, “les journées du patrimoine” in France, or “The night of religion” in Barcelona, Spain, in order to celebrate religious diversity. The State could also promote monthly Open doors of the Sacred sites for their neighbourhood, so the neighbours feel concerned and proud of having them in their area.

Promote and fund visit of places of worship for all Schools: through education and discovery of the place, the children can learn about the different religions that are being held in their country, and through it break their prejudices. Such an activity is being organized in Lyon, France, between the Great Mosque, the Cathedral and the Great Synagogue, and it proves to be a highlight for students and teachers, in education against hatred and protection of sacred sites.

I. Security Enhancement – One UK example has shown success in preventing violence by training and placing security guards at entrances to synagogues and religious schools. While this seems completely against the ethos of a religious place of worship, it is a sad reality that terror attacks against churches, mosques, synagogues, temples etc... are not going away. There are many best practices in use that can be adopted by countries around the world.

II. Openness, Transparency & Religious Literacy – Many of us believe that by building more cohesive societies through openness, local cooperation and teaching about the cultural heritage connected to religious sites, it may encourage more solidarity and support. Some countries have annual open days where the public can visit houses of worship of many faiths and learn more about their worship and local activities.