**Stand Up For Migrants**

**Roundtable on confronting hate in our societies and reshaping narratives on migration**

***Geneva, 10 July 2019***

**Concept Note**

**Background**

Discrimination, xenophobia, related intolerance, hate speech and hate crime, have a severe impact on human rights. Such acts and behaviour harm not only the direct victims, but also entire communities. Of particular concern is the pervasiveness—and in some cases, the resurgence—of anti-migrant xenophobia and other forms of bias across the world. Migrants, minorities associated with migration and those who defend their rights are often the first to be targeted, used as easy scapegoats for cheap political gains, and often unable to seek or obtain redress. Left effectively unaddressed, such narratives, actions and behaviour can lead to damaging effects on the individuals affected, as well as the wider society and the spaces for defenders of migrants’ human rights.

Sharp spikes of violence have been documented at the local, regional and national level, particularly following polarising events. For instance, the FBI reported that in 2016 the United States witnessed a 19% rise in violence targeting Muslims[[1]](#footnote-2). It also assessed that once every 90 minutes in the U.S. someone—or some business or institution—is attacked because of personal characteristics[[2]](#footnote-3). Technology and social media have accelerated the spread of hate. Furthermore, groups and individuals, sometimes with the support or acquiescence of political actors, have felt increasingly empowered to disseminate anti-migrant narratives, also providing a permissible climate for the criminalisation of the work of human rights defenders.

At the same time, considerable momentum is building to push back against rising violence and hate speech against migrants and minorities. Across the globe, anti-hate crime and human rights activists are mobilising to counter this rising tide of hate and build a positive narrative around human rights and migration. For example, thousands of Stop Funding Hate supporters are pressuring businesses to rethink where they advertise; in other instances, volunteer groups are seeking to counter online hate through engaging in dialogue and positive messaging.

In the context of migration, Member States of the United Nations have also reaffirmed their commitment to effective respect, protection and fulfilment of the human rights of all migrants, as well as to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance against migrants and their families, through the Global Compact for Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration. More specifically, they have committed to condemn and counter expressions, acts and manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, violence, xenophobia and related intolerance against all migrants; and to promote an open and evidence-based public discourse on migration and migrants in partnership with all parts of society, that generates a more realistic, humane and constructive perception in this regard (Objective 17). The UN remains committed to tackle this issue, including through the Secretary-General’s plan to develop a UN-wide strategy and global plan of action against hate speech.

Against this backdrop, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Stop Funding Hate, are intending to bring together representatives from various groups who are engaged in challenging hate and reframing harmful narratives in society to discuss practical ways in which to address these issues based on shared values and the human rights framework. In this context, the Rabat Plan of Action ([A/HRC/22/17/Add.4](https://undocs.org/A/HRC/22/17/Add.4)), the General Recommendation No. 35 on combating racist hate speech ([CERD/C/GC/35](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD/C/GC/35&Lang=en)), the General Comment No. 34 on freedoms of opinion and expression ([CCPR/C/GC/34](https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/GC34.pdf)) and Objective 17 of the Global Compact for Migration[[3]](#footnote-4) provide guidance on addressing incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, while ensuring full respect for freedom of expression.

**Objectives**

The principal objectives of the event are to:

* Bring together a variety of activists who are seeking to confront hate and build inclusive societies and create a network of mutual support and collaboration in the context of these campaigns;
* Identify the lessons that activists might learn from other campaigns, creating a tool box of solutions that could be applied in local, regional or national contexts to challenge hate and to promote positive, inclusive messages;
* Recognise ways in which the tools and opportunities provided by the international human rights framework can be useful; and
* Explore how multi-stakeholder partnerships and initiatives can galvanise and engage communities to stand up for migrants and others who face hatred and intolerance.

**Participants**

The event seeks to bring together a range of actors who are involved in initiatives, campaigns or other actions to counter hate and build inclusive societies. The focus of the event will be to bring together participants who can offer examples of what success would look like in such campaigns, and those with specific examples – both positive and negative – of using a variety of campaigning. While there will be a focus at the meeting on those who work on countering xenophobia and anti-migrant narratives, the meeting will also include a range of activists who are seeking to counter hatred on different grounds and through varied methods and approaches, ideally with a broad geographical spread. The participants may thus include human rights defenders, civil society organisations, local authorities, faith leaders, business actors, journalists, the media, creative artists, community organisers, national human rights institutions, international or regional human rights mechanisms, international or regional organisations, and other relevant stakeholders.

1. <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/14/us/hate-crimes-muslim-white-fbi-trnd/index.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://www.un.org/pga/72/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2018/07/180713\_Agreed-Outcome\_Global-Compact-for-Migration.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-4)