

## **About ODVV**

1. The Organization for Defending Victims of Violence (ODVV) is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan organization in Special Consultative Status to ECOSOC. ODVV was established in 1988 in Tehran and has been active in the field of human rights and humanitarian activities.

2. ODVV is also associated to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI), and national coordinator of the Global March Against Child Labor (based in New Delhi). ODVV has cooperated with international organizations in a variety of issues and has working relations with many NGOs in Iran and around the globe.

3. ODVV is also a member of the International Organization against Small and Light Weapons, the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations (CONGO), the International Movement for a Just World (JUST), AMAN Network of Rehabilitation Centers in the Middle East and North Africa and International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims (IRCT).

4. During the last 2 decades, we have done so many activities, mainly informative with regard to human rights and support of the victims of violence. Various human rights education courses, workshops, seminars, conferences have been held or co-held by ODVV for various sectors of society: civil society institutions and governmental organizations.

### **5. Other Activities:**

- Participation in UN Commission on Human Rights annual sessions, and the Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva. Written and oral statements on various items of the agenda are issued by ODVV.

- Internship for foreign students

- Publication of different books and booklets on human rights such as Rights of the Child, Racism, Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia. Publication of Defenders Newsletter (English), human rights news and developments bulletin.

6. As a NGO active in human rights, ODVV has collected documents and data, through published information in news websites, and is providing the following report on the human rights situation of Sweden, with the aim of the improvement of the human rights situation.

## 1) Islamophobia and xenophobia

7. Sweden seems to be in breach of its human rights commitments due to equality between and respect to different cultures and religions. One of the main tasks of a democratic government is to combat threats to freedom of religion. We are concerned about the attacks on Islamic and Jewish institutions. During the last UPR in 2015, Sweden received 28 recommendations to fortify its efforts to prevent “hate speech” and “hate crime” against minorities, to combat racism and to effectively investigate, prosecute and punish all such cases. It is noted that the country has accepted 25 recommendations out of 28<sup>1</sup>, but our organization regrets the reports of the rising trend of Islamophobia in the country since 2015.

8. According to a report by European Network Against Racism, Muslim women in Sweden are primarily easy targets for verbal and physical abuse as well as discrimination. Moreover, in public places and media, having headscarf or “Hijab” usually represents a symbol of oppression and trigger feeling sorry for whom wear it.<sup>2</sup> These practices make it difficult for Muslim women to have the same power as others to shape society and their own lives.

9. Also several media researchers have concluded that a negative and stereotypical image of Islam and Muslims is presented in the press and social media. Muslims in general often appear, or are associated, with negative or stereotypical notions such as violence and oppression of women, terrorists, Jihadists, sexists, uncivilized and rapists.<sup>3</sup> It legitimizes hate crimes against individuals, and undermines the European Union ideals of peace and coexistence. Half of the hate crimes on the internet were committed against Muslims in Sweden in 2017-2018, according to the head of online hate speech monitoring group.<sup>4</sup> In 2017, mosques in Sweden were attacked a record 38 times<sup>5</sup> which is 10 times more than 2016. Types of attack included fires or attempts to start fires, stone throwing, property damage and graffiti.<sup>6</sup>

10. According to reports, the rise of far-right parties is a vital threat to democratic order in Sweden. The mainstreaming and normalization of the far-right policies within mainstream politics is dangerous. They often treat Muslims as “a threat” to European and Christian values.<sup>7</sup> An unsubstantiated report on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish an Islamic State in Sweden was published by a Swedish state agency. The Administrative Court of Appeal later

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.upr-info.org/database/index.php?limit=0&f\\_SUR=168&f\\_SMR=All&order=&orderDir=ASC&orderP=true&f\\_Issue=All&searchReco=&resultMax=300&response=&action\\_type=&session=&SuRRgrp=&SuROrg=&SMRRgrp=&SMROrg=&pledges=RecoOnly](https://www.upr-info.org/database/index.php?limit=0&f_SUR=168&f_SMR=All&order=&orderDir=ASC&orderP=true&f_Issue=All&searchReco=&resultMax=300&response=&action_type=&session=&SuRRgrp=&SuROrg=&SMRRgrp=&SMROrg=&pledges=RecoOnly)

<sup>2</sup>

[https://www.myndighetensst.se/download/18.1f4f2f6115680af2ce1a1303/1471273071822/forgotten\\_women\\_report\\_sweden\\_-\\_final-2.pdf](https://www.myndighetensst.se/download/18.1f4f2f6115680af2ce1a1303/1471273071822/forgotten_women_report_sweden_-_final-2.pdf)

<sup>3</sup>

[https://www.myndighetensst.se/download/18.1f4f2f6115680af2ce1a1303/1471273071822/forgotten\\_women\\_report\\_sweden\\_-\\_final-2.pdf](https://www.myndighetensst.se/download/18.1f4f2f6115680af2ce1a1303/1471273071822/forgotten_women_report_sweden_-_final-2.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.iric.org/tabid/99/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/1710/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2018/06/12/mosque-attacks-increase-tenfold-in-sweden-in-2017>

<sup>6</sup> <http://muslimnews.co.uk/news/islamophobia/sweden-sharp-rise-attacks-mosques-across-sweden/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Sweden.pdf>

dismissed the report as of “highly limited” value. The author is a senior fellow at the Brussels-based think tank European Foundation for Democracy, which plays a central role in disseminating this conspiracy theory, which helps in defaming Muslim civil society actors.<sup>8</sup>

## **2) Arms trade**

11. Sweden has become a major world supplier of weapons counting a number of regimes criticized for human rights abuses among its customers. Leading various international peace efforts to help resolve major conflicts across the globe have helped Sweden establish the image of a peace-loving country that cares for others. However, a steady rise in the country's weapons business over the past years, including its major dealings with some Arab States in the Persian Gulf region, like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has cast doubt on Stockholm's true intentions.<sup>9</sup>

12. According to Svenska Freds, a 135-year-old Swedish anti-militarization group, the arms sales to Saudi Arabia reportedly approached six billion Swedish kronor (\$741mn) between 2010 and 2016.<sup>10</sup> That means the arms deals between the two sides have continued throughout Saudi Arabia's deadly war on Yemen, which began in March 2015 and has killed nearly 14,000 Yemeni civilians.

13. In a move that further proved Sweden's desire to expand military ties with UAE and Saudi Arabia, Saab opened a new office in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi in late 2017.<sup>11</sup> In late 2018, all of Sweden's neighbours like Norway, Germany, Denmark and Finland have stopped arms exports to Saudi Arabia, however, Stockholm stands out for its plans to maintain its military cooperation with the regional superpower citing its 'limited' scale. For Sweden's part, it is about follow-up deliveries to previous purchases, despite rising opposition from the Green and the Left Party.<sup>12</sup>

## **3) Recommendations**

14. The legal and political recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance. Swedish parliament should adopt a resolution on combatting Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations.

15. ODVV is particularly worried about the data about islamophobia in Sweden. The government should adopt national action plans against racism addressing Islamophobia as a specific form of racism and impose sanctions on companies and public institutions that violate the Discrimination Act.

16. In the face of the increased and generalized suspicion and marginalization of Muslims in the post-terrorist attacks and migration contexts, ODVV calls on Sweden to Initiate a tailored educational training programme for police, teachers, staff within the public and private sector that

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.globalmbwatch.com/2017/03/05/new-report-on-swedish-muslim-brotherhood-draws-academic-ire/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.yemenpress.org/politics/is-sweden-complicit-in-saudi-war-on-yemen/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://ipolitics.ca/2018/04/09/the-uneasy-co-existence-of-arms-exports-and-feminist-foreign-policy/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://saabgroup.com/media/news-press/news/2017-12/saab-starts-development-and-production-in-the-united-arab-emirates/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://sputniknews.com/military/201811261070132468-sweden-saudi-arabia-arms-export/>

offer services to the inhabitants, with focus on addressing the root causes of anti-Muslim sentiment and its consequences for Muslim women.

17. Although Sweden introduced guidelines for arms exports, these measures are insufficient and ODVV calls upon the state to disrupt all military cooperation with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

18. Sweden should review its legislation in order to prohibit the trade and transit of arms to places where it is suspected that children are used as soldiers.