

UK statement on hate crime at HDIM 2019

We fully align with the statement delivered by France on behalf of the EU and would like to add some comments in our national capacity.

In April this year, the UK marked the first Stephen Lawrence Memorial Day. Stephen Lawrence was 18 when he was murdered in an unprovoked racist attack in London in 1993. His family worked tirelessly to campaign for justice for Stephen, and were instrumental in the government's decision to launch an inquiry into the response to Stephen's murder.

Twenty years ago this February, the report of that inquiry (the Macpherson Inquiry) was published.

This is widely recognised as a watershed moment in our journey to fully comprehend and to address racism, discrimination and hate crime in the UK.

Since then we have developed one of the world's most robust responses to hate crime, including our leadership in recognising the needs of victims of hate crimes.

We put victims at the heart of the hate crime definition adopted by the Government. It is based on the perception of the victim or any other person as being a crime motivated by prejudice or hate.

In the UK we treat all hate crimes with equal seriousness. We are clear that no one should be targeted for hatred because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or transgender identity.

We know that hate crimes can cause lasting physical and emotional damage. They can evoke despair, anger, and anxiety in victims, and spread fear and mistrust in communities, thus weakening the glue that binds our society together. They strike at the heart of our democracy by undermining the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination.

The Government's Hate Crime Action Plan, which we refreshed in 2018, sets out our approach to combatting hate crime. We focus on five key areas: preventing hate crime, increasing reporting, supporting victims, responding in communities and building our understanding.

We also have a strong legal framework in place with criminal penalties for offences such as incitement to racial hatred and for racially or religiously aggravated assault and criminal damage. As part of the Hate Crime Action Plan we have asked the Law Commission to undertake a review of our hate crime legislation to ensure it works as effectively as possible.

We welcome the important role that civil society and voluntary sector organisations play, including through the use of third party reporting services.

The UK is fully committed to engaging with all actors to help build a more inclusive, tolerant and cohesive society, and to ensure that we live up to our OSCE commitments to combat all forms of discrimination.