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Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

No Hate Parliamentary Alliance

**Parliamentary Webinar on
The infiltration of law enforcement bodies and the military by racist and
far-right extremists**

Information document prepared by the Secretariat

1. On 18 December 2020, the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance held a hearing on “The infiltration of law enforcement bodies and the military by racist and far-right extremists”, open to members of the Alliance and the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and open to the public via streaming on the Parliamentary Assembly’s Facebook page.
2. The initiative aimed to raise awareness of the presence of racist and far right extremists in the ranks of law enforcement bodies and the military, following on from reports recently published on the subject by the French online news outlet Mediapart, various media outlets in Germany, and the German civil intelligence service.
3. Referring to these reports, Mr Momodou Malcolm Jallow, the Parliamentary Assembly’s General Rapporteur on combating racism and intolerance, pointed out that there were hundreds of cases of infiltration of law enforcement bodies and the military by racist and far-right extremists. As law enforcement bodies and the military are part of the State and have an important role to play in the functioning of democratic institutions, this a worrisome development that calls for adequate countermeasures. The rule of law and human rights must be protected for everyone.
4. As highlighted by Ms Sarah Khan, the United Kingdom’s Commissioner for Countering Extremism, there has been a significant rise in far-right extremism in the last few years, and it is becoming increasingly threatening. This phenomenon is insidious, as it evolves rapidly and tends to become more complex. Whether in the military, the police, political parties or democratic institutions, “entryism” has one root problem that needs to be addressed, namely the active spread of far-right narratives and ideologies. Countering this phenomenon requires an understanding of how it appeals to certain sections of Europe’s populations.
5. An important indication which emerged from the webinar, particularly from the contribution of Ms Rebekah Delsol of the Open Society Initiative, is that while extremist attitudes and behaviours may be individual, a more general issue of structural racism is part of the picture, and also needs to be addressed. Indeed, structural racism is what makes the biased behaviour of some individuals possible. In many cases the racist views and activities of individual military or law enforcement personnel are known within their services, but action is only taken once they are exposed publicly and become the centre of a scandal. Such action, moreover, is often weak and rarely involves disciplinary dismissal, which would be the most effective measure.
6. Structural racism may be underestimated within police forces and viewed as a “casual” attitude, not linked to an ideology and possibly originating in a different historic period and handed down from generation to generation, as explained by Mr Jean-Claude Vullierme, former French National Police Chief Superintendent. In Mr Vullierme’s analysis, the lack of proper training and the ensuing sense of helplessness felt by police officers when confronted with difficult situations also contribute to explaining why certain abuses may take place.
7. The main recommendations emerging from the webinar may be summarised as follows. Public authorities in Council of Europe member States should:
 - adopt and enforce robust legislation against persistent extremist offenders (individuals who play a leading and influential role in disseminating far-right extremist narratives; those who organise, propagate and recruit);
 - carry out education and information activities in school curricula and for the adult public to help build societal resilience and inoculate people against extremist narratives;
 - provide anti-discrimination training for police officers and law enforcement staff in general as well as members of the armed forces; this should adequately stress the main goals of a police service as part of a democratic State;
 - improve the recruitment of law enforcement bodies and the military, increasing the proportion of staff of minority ethnic origin and analysing the motivation and profile of applicants to ensure their compatibility with the goals and democratic values of the relevant services;
 - enforce strong national standards prohibiting individual and structural racism, including through targeted action plans and clear and decisive sanctions in cases of racism;
 - collect ethnic-disaggregated data which is essential in monitoring and addressing racial disparities;
 - establish and ensure the good functioning of independent oversight bodies and make complaint mechanisms available and easily accessible.

Additional information:

The video recording of the webinar is available on the YouTube channel of the Parliamentary Assembly at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDX1NgqD5gw>

Information about the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance and its activities is available at: [No Hate Parliamentary Alliance \(coe.int\)](http://NoHateParliamentaryAlliance.coe.int)

In the wake of the webinar, Mr Emmanuel Jacob, President of the European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL) wrote to the General Rapporteur on Combating Racism and Intolerance to express the support of this organisation to the conclusions of the webinar. The text of the message is attached to this document.

Appendix

Letter from Mr Emmanuel Jacob, President of EUROMIL to Mr Momodou Malcolm Jallow, General Rapporteur on combating racism and intolerance of the PACE, dated 2 January 2021

Subject: Racist and far-right extremists in the armed forces

Dear Mr Jallow,

First, I would like to send you our best wishes for a happy, healthy and safe 2021.

Allow me to introduce to you the European Organisation of Military Associations and Trade Unions (EUROMIL). EUROMIL is an umbrella organisation composed of 32 military associations and trade unions from 21 countries. It is the main Europe-wide forum for cooperation among professional military associations on issues of common concern. EUROMIL strives to secure and advance the human rights, fundamental freedoms and socio-professional interests of military personnel of all ranks in Europe and promotes the concept of "Citizen in Uniform". As such, a soldier is entitled to the same rights and obligations as any other citizen. EUROMIL particularly calls for recognition of the right of servicemen and -women to form and join trade unions and independent associations and for their inclusion in a regular social dialogue by the authorities.

Even if we address you as a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and especially as General Rapporteur on combating racism and intolerance, we would also like to inform you that we have a Swedish military trade union among our member associations. The Swedish Association of Military Officers (SAMO or Officersförbundet) joined EUROMIL in 2010, after being a well-respected partner for many years, and is one of the most active working members of our European umbrella organisation.

For what concerns the Council of Europe, I would like to inform you that EUROMIL has participatory status at the Council of Europe and is registered on the list of INGOs entitled to lodge collective complaints at the Committee of Social Rights. On 24 February 2010, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)4 on human rights of members of armed forces, elaborated by the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) in the period 2007-2009. EUROMIL, which actively participated in the drafting of this Recommendation, still considers this document as an essential tool to protect and promote the rights of military personnel in Europe. 10 years after its adoption, EUROMIL recently called on the CDDH to update Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)4 on human rights of members of armed forces. This proposition is currently under consideration for the years to come.

Dear Mr Jallow, recently we followed with attention the webinar on "The infiltration of law enforcement bodies and the military by racist and far-right extremists". As an umbrella organisation of military associations and trade unions, we are of course not a specialist in this matter. However, it goes without saying that EUROMIL, as a defender of humane and fundamental values in and by the military, racism and extreme behavior in and by the armed forces, does not leave us indifferent. Armed Forces and their personnel are at the service of society and must be the defenders of the humane and fundamental values that we, as "citizens and workers in uniform" must propagate and support.

EUROMIL therefore endorses your conclusions of the webinar. Yes, there is no time to lose and one cannot remain silent about this. As you have already mentioned, there is a need for strong political leadership, but there is certainly also a need for awareness, information and knowledge within on these issues in our armed forces. Just as International Humanitarian Law has its place in the training of military personnel, social problems such as racism and extreme ideology and behaviour must be open to discussion.

EUROMIL is clear about this; extremism has no place in the armed forces! When in the summer of 2020 extremism in the German armed forces reached the media, EUROMIL did not hesitate to clearly oppose this. Only by expressing such points of view and making them discussable, can we make our armed forces an open institution under democratic control that reflects society.

We are always available to give the necessary support to your important mandate that you have been given as general rapporteur. We are available to question our member organisations about this or to organise an online event (with your participation) to inform them about this and to enter into a debate with them and in this way provide input for your report.

We are at your disposal and look forward to your response.

Best regards,

Emmanuel JACOB
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