

HATE CRIME IN SWEDEN

The normalization in Swedish politics of negative and derogatory narratives about ethnic and religious minorities and people with a migration background by persons in leading positions is particularly concerning because it may cause an increase in negative sentiments about such groups among the general public in Sweden. In turn, this can lead to an increase in discrimination and hate crime directed at them.

The number of reported hate crimes with antisemitic motives increased significantly in 2023 compared to 2022, and there has also been a spike in public Quran burnings in various locations, including in front of mosques and in areas with a high number of Muslim residents during the month of Ramadan. Meanwhile, authorities apply a narrow interpretation of the hate speech legislation, not in line with human rights standards, resulting in cases of hate speech not being prosecuted.

The indigenous Sami people are exposed to hate crime that range from offensive descriptions to severe racist attacks, threats, including death threats, and violence, according to a recent report by the Swedish Council for Crime Prevention. It also shows that these crimes occur when the Sami assert their rights. Reports warn that police efforts may be deprioritised without a new mandate for enhanced actions against hate crimes.

In the previous Universal Periodic Review of Sweden, a significant number of recommendations concerned the need to strengthen efforts to combat and eliminate hate crime. Yet, the number of solved hate crimes has stayed considerably low. Only 6 percent of crimes registered in 2020 and that were investigated up until May 2023 were solved.

Recommendations

- Adjust the wording of the provision criminalising hate speech in section 8 in chapter 16 of the Swedish Criminal Code to clarify that the context in which the speech was delivered will affect the assessment of whether it constitutes hate speech.
- Instruct the Police Authority to prioritise hate crimes, including crimes against the Sami, and earmark police resources for the investigation of such crimes.
- Allocate necessary financial resources to the hate crime units within the police, to enable them to efficiently investigate hate crime and hate speech.



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