



**United Nations Human Rights Council, 32<sup>nd</sup> Session (13 June – 1 July 2016)**  
**Item 9 General Debate; Follow up and implementation of the Durban Declaration**  
**28 June 2016**

**Speaker: BHA representative, Cordelia Tucker O’Sullivan**

Thank you Mr. President.

As humanists, we are committed to the building of a more open, free and equal society through an ethical approach based on humanism. We believe that refugees and migrants are first and foremost human beings [who hold human rights] and should be treated as such. The reality for those arriving into Europe runs counter to this, at times being met with attacks from far-right activists, alongside the rise of populist politics and xenophobia.

In Hungary, the government ordered the construction of a razor-wire wall at its border with Serbia, and introduced a law enabling the arrest and prosecution of any migrants attempting to cross.<sup>1</sup> Following this, authorities reported that they had arrested 200 asylum seekers at their border.<sup>2</sup> This happened against the backdrop of Prime Minister Orbán associating migrants with terrorists, and declaring that Hungary, in its pursuit of anti-migrant policy, was defending a ‘Christian Europe’.<sup>3</sup>

In Russia, government-led nationalism, strongly supported by the Orthodox Church, has successfully whipped up anti-migrant sentiment, with Russia granting asylum to a mere 2000 persons between 2011 and 2015, all while refusing to take part in any resettlement scheme.<sup>4</sup>

The government of the United Kingdom, against a backdrop of rising populism, agreed to accept only 20,000 Syrian refugees over the next five years.<sup>5</sup> Following the referendum last week, there have been numerous reports of visceral anti-migrant abuses being directed at EU and non-EU migrants alike, including leaflets being distributed containing the words ‘No more Polish vermin’.<sup>6</sup>

The President of the Czech Republic called the surge in refugee numbers ‘an organized invasion’ claiming that it would be ‘practically impossible’ to integrate the Muslim community into European society.<sup>7</sup>

The Durban Declaration clearly condemns ‘violent nationalist ideologies based on racial or national prejudice’,<sup>8</sup> yet this harmful trend has contributed to the rise of anti-migrant sentiment and has led to the pursuit of measures which are at odds with the right to seek asylum [as recognised in the 1951 Convention on Refugees.] We call on the Council to step up its efforts to combat populist nationalism, especially in member States.

Thank you.

<sup>1</sup> <http://act4democracy.eu/spip.php?article57>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-15/hungary-arrests-200-asylum-seekers-breaching-border-laws/6778526>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thenation.com/article/how-xenophobia-could-ruin-the-best-thing-about-the-eu/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v37/n19/daniel-trilling/what-to-do-with-the-people-who-do-make-it-across>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/07/uk-will-accept-up-to-20000-syrian-refugees-david-cameron-confirms>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-36633388>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/18/integrating-muslims-into-europe-is-impossible-says-czech-president>

<sup>8</sup> Paragraph 84 of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action