

## **Declaration adopted by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) at its 26th plenary meeting (Strasbourg 11-14 December 2001)**

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ECRI fully endorses the content of the communiqué on international action against terrorism adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe at its 109th Session, held in Strasbourg on 8 November 2001. It particularly welcomes the sections of the communiqué concerning the safeguarding of fundamental values and investing in democracy and also welcomes the fact that the Ministers stressed the particular importance they attached to the fight against all forms of intolerance and discrimination. ECRI also notes with satisfaction that the Council of Europe intends to take initiatives to promote a wide intercultural and inter-religious dialogue.

Terrorism and terrorist activities, irrespective of their origin, are incompatible with and threaten the values, principles and ideals of liberty, democracy, justice and human rights. Terrorism builds upon hatred and fanaticism, which in turn lead to discrimination and human rights violations.

At the same time, the response to the threat of terrorism should not itself encroach upon the very values and principles we aim to safeguard, and should not in any way weaken the protection and promotion of human rights. Terrorism should be combated, but it should not become a pretext under which discrimination and intolerance are allowed to flourish.

ECRI reiterates its own strong commitment to the values and principles laid down and protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. ECRI is profoundly convinced of the principle of equal dignity of all human beings, which is the cornerstone of all democratic systems and forms the basis of these texts.

In this context, ECRI is all the more determined to continue and intensify its efforts to combat racism and intolerance. It is convinced that such efforts can help to prevent the development of the conditions in which terrorism may gain ground.

ECRI calls on the governments of the Council of Europe member States to remain vigilant vis-à-vis hostile reactions towards particular groups of the population. These reactions and their discriminatory effects must be closely monitored and specific steps should be taken to prevent and to counter them.

ECRI, for its part, wishes to contribute to the wider efforts within the Council of Europe to respond to the threats posed by terrorism and its consequences, by building on its existing work and taking above all an action-oriented approach.

In future, every aspect of ECRI's work, especially its country-by-country reports, its general policy recommendations and its collection and dissemination of examples of "good practices", will take account of the need to involve the various sectors of society in intercultural dialogue and of the importance of mutual respect. ECRI will step up its activities concerning its relations with civil society. As part of this activity, an action programme will be launched on 21 March 2002 on the occasion of the International Day against Racial Discrimination.