



الدورة السادسة للمنتدى
العربي الأوربي للشباب
6th Arab-European
Youth Forum
Fez, 25-28 April 2017

FEZ DECLARATION

OVERCOMING HATE AND EXTREMISM TOGETHER



We, Arab and European youth, met in the city of Fez, Morocco, for the 6th Arab-European Youth Forum dedicated to **Overcoming Hate Speech and Extremism Together**. We deepened our understanding of hate speech and extremism and their consequences on young people. We also explored and shared ways of preventing and combating them.

Hate speech is one of the most prolific forms of intolerance and xenophobia, particularly online. In mainstream political discourses, we have seen toxic mixtures of populism, hate speech, fake news and “alternative facts” posing a serious threat to freedom, peace and democracy. We are all exposed to hate speech and to the consequences of violent extremism, although in different forms and at varying levels.

Too many people have fallen victim to terrorism and extremist violence. We are alarmed by a general regression of universal human rights, especially of women’s rights and the rights of minorities. This is not acceptable and threatens our common future.

We believe firmly in the importance of co-operation and dialogue among youth from Arab and the European regions, and we appreciate the long-term commitment by the Council of Europe and the League of Arab States in this process. We have been particularly inspired by the successes and experiences of the Council of Europe’s No Hate Speech Movement campaign. We welcome the decision of the League of Arab States to initiate a campaign against terrorism and violent extremism. They support our determination in not letting our futures be hijacked by forces of fear, aggressive nationalism and intolerance.

We have been encouraged by the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security and its recognition of the role that young people play in peace building and overcoming conflict. Hate speech stands in the way of peace and is used everywhere to fuel conflict and justify violence. We want to contribute to the implementation of the resolution’s principles in our countries and organisations. As young people, we share a common will to exercise our right to participation in all spheres of society.

We are alarmed by the continuation and proliferation of armed conflicts and the huge toll they take on innocent people. We are upset by the refusal of many of our countries in meeting their obligations with respect to refugees, many of them unaccompanied children and young people. We are equally worried by the growing inequalities and disparities in accessing fundamental human rights and in the attempts to curb the rights to freedom of association and freedom of expression. There is no excuse for hate speech and violent extremism; nor should they serve as an excuse for human rights violations.

Young people represent more than half of the Arab population, yet many suffer from unemployment and a large majority lives in poverty; this puts at risk the potential of this “demographic dividend”. The precariousness affecting young people in virtually all our countries hinders our chances of living in dignity, makes us more vulnerable to extremist and “quick fix” solutions, and reduces confidence in social institutions. In too many countries corruption is rampant and governments are not accountable to their citizens. Widespread lack of confidence in governments is often accompanied by high expectations of democracy; these expectations cannot be betrayed.

We observed progress in implementing proposals from the 5th Forum held in Strasbourg in 2015. Most, however, remain to be implemented. More is needed to move away from a culture of hate towards a culture of love. We call upon the Council of Europe, the League of Arab States and their partners to follow up on this Forum by:

1. Developing common and updated definitions of hate speech and measures to counter it
2. Supporting the recognition of 22 July as a day to remember all victims of hate crime
3. Campaigning together on Action day for Human Rights online on 10 December
4. Raising awareness about the attacks and hate speech against refugees, and advocating for their human rights
5. Developing counter and alternative narratives to hate speech and extremism based on human rights; the work of youth organisations on Euro-Arab co-operation can be promoted as an alternative narrative
6. Ensuring equality of opportunities in participation for all young people – regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, nationality or minority / majority status; the effective implementation of anti-discrimination laws is particularly important
7. Acknowledging and combatting sexism and sexual discrimination in all its forms, including the recognition that Muslim women are often more affected than men by islamophobia
8. Increasing provisions for quality human rights education, digital citizenship and peace education: all are effective in preventing hate speech and violent extremism; both formal and non-formal education have important roles to play in fostering competences for intercultural learning and critical thinking; investments in quality education and adequate facilities are needed
9. Reviewing school books and manuals to stop the propagation of prejudices and stereotypes, and offer alternative narratives for living together in dignity and diversity
10. Taking an active role in the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution on Youth, Peace and Security and connecting it with the Sustainable Development Goals related to youth
11. Investing in the entrepreneurship of young people, particularly social entrepreneurship
12. Establishing or increasing funds for youth-led youth programmes and activities, including Euro-Arab co-operation projects
13. Initiating or supporting exchanges between Arab and European young people, including the easing of visa and other travel restrictions for young people
14. Extending systems for the recognition of academic qualifications among the member states of the Council of Europe and of the Arab League
15. Organising a Euro-Arab training of trainers on youth participation, and developing a pilot training seminar on youth participation based on the 50:50 model of the Council of Europe, associating representatives of youth organisations and public services
16. Setting-up of a follow-up group composed of participants of the Forum to support the implementation of these proposals and prepare the 7th Forum
17. Continuing the efforts to establish a network of alumni of the Euro-Arab Youth fora
18. Communicating this declaration to their decision-making bodies.

We value the European Youth Forum as a partner in our Forum. We wholeheartedly thank the Ministry of Youth and Sport of Morocco for its hospitality and generosity in hosting us and the national committee of the No Hate Speech Movement of Morocco for their support.