Psychological Effects of Hate Crime

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Psychological Effects of
Hate Crime – Individual Experience
and Impact on Community

Latvian Centre for Human Rights

2008

Psychological Effects of Hate Crime – Individual Experience and Impact on Community (*Attacking who I am*)

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Psychological Effects of
Hate Crime – Individual Experience
and Impact on Community

(Attacking Who I am)
A qualitative study

Inta Dzelme, Ph. D.

Latvian Centre for Human Rights

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Introduction

Although the argument that hate crime carries with it more serious consequences for both the actual victim, the victim's community and society at large has been well established in the literature, until recently little specific research on the effects of hate crime on victims has been conducted. Most of what has been published in this field stems from research conducted in the USA. In recent years some such research has also been published in some European countries, such as the United Kingdom and Sweden. From this it is possible to confirm that individual victims of hate crime suffer more deep and long-lasting mental health and well-being consequences than victims of comparable crimes with no hate motivation.

Based on this, the design for the research and the present publication was included as an output in the two-year LCHR-led project "Combating Hate Crimes in Latvia and the Czech Republic: Legislation, Police Practice and NGOs", funded by the EU. This output was planned in order to contribute to this growing body of literature with an example of qualitative research, albeit modest, from a country where such research had not yet been done on this theme, but primarily in order to produce more effective arguments for the local audience of why specific responses to hate crime are needed, and why these crimes should receive priority attention, even if the recorded number of such crimes still remains low. Thus, the research paper "Psychological effects of hate crime – individual experience or community response" aims at highlighting the impact of experiences of hate crime on victims, their families and their communities in Latvia. The paper briefly reviews some literature concerning the psychological impact of hate crimes on victims and vulnerable groups, and then goes on to highlight the main themes emerging from interviews conducted with victims of hate crimes, who are representatives of visible minorities, LGBT people as well as Roma, who are a traditional minority in Latvia.

Through raising the awareness of the experience of hate crime victims, the research paper underlines why addressing the issue is important for individuals as well as all of society and, thus, contributes to the understanding of the need for specific legislation and effective law enforcement. The evidence gathered also clearly shows the importance of establishing specialised victim support services for victims of hate crimes. None of this can be done effectively without the direct participation of members of the vulnerable minorities concerned, which underlines the importance of promoting police cooperation with civil society, including NGOs.

The paper is one of the outputs of the project "Combating Hate Crimes in Latvia and the Czech Republic: Legislation, Police Practice and NGOs", which has aimed to improve police capacity in identifying and investigating hate crimes, and to strengthen police and NGO co-operation. The project has included development of cooperation between NGOs and police over the duration of the project, through, inter alia, mutual exchange study visits for Latvian and Czech Police and NGO representatives, the publication of papers on the legislative developments and police practices concerning hate crimes in Latvia and the Czech Republic, as well as national seminars and international conferences in both the EU member states. All activities represent the search for new and effective ways of

addressing hate crimes through increased awareness, improved policing and meaningful and sustainable co-operation between the police and NGOs.

LCHR

Abstract

This report highlights outcomes of a qualitative study of the psychological effects on victims of hate crime in Latvia. It is a response to the question of why the immediate awareness and knowledge of the experience of hate crime victims is an important issue for the whole community.

The study provides an overview of the research question, surveys the relevant literature, provides observations on the methodology applied, presents concrete field materials and data, and offers a discussion and summary of outcomes and implications.

The analysis evolved from six in-depth interviews with hate crime victims and from an open focus group meeting of seven participants. The research participants were representatives of the so-called visible minorities, of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons), and of the Roma in Latvia.

During the individual interviews and the group meeting, the experiences of victimisation were described both from the time of the incident and as perceived effects later. The description of experiences included thoughts, feelings, body sensations, the impact on themselves and others, and on their way of being in the world. Disclosure of the experiences was allowed to emerge spontaneously, unhampered by any prior expectations of this researcher.

The collected data was analysed in accordance with qualitative research methods and standards. Nine core themes were identified as inherent in the experience: (1) trying to comprehend the victimisation: attempting not to take it personally; (2) seeing hate incidents as a burden on daily life; (3) far reaching impact of physical attacks; (4) passivity and lack of help from the people around; (5) physical symptoms and stress; (6) multiple layers of psychological impact; (7) personal consequences of victimisation; (8) impact on significant others, families, and children; and (9) consequences to the community; resentment of injury.

This study reflects the psycho-emotional effects of experiencing hate crime victimisation in Latvia. Individual consequences include various physical and psychological constraints, including but not limited to changes in appearance and behaviours; attempts to construct personal safety measures; damage to self confidence; strain on personal relationships; restricted social activities; and withdrawal. The social consequences (i.e. resentment, constriction, emigration) of these experiences are analysed along with suggestions for future integration strategies. The determination to take part in activities for bettering the prevailing status of their social group and apparent burnout in some cases is discussed. Possible limitations of this investigation are also addressed.

Acknowledgements

My regard goes to all the research participants who entrusted their deeply personal and most vulnerable experiences, feelings and thoughts. It takes great courage to reveal to a stranger the burden of physical and psychological injuries inflicted onto one's self.

As one of the participants described, *"No man feels comfortable talking about that someone hits you on the head… for a man–to talk about this – it is humiliation!"*

This research project was made possible by the trustworthy activities of the Latvian Centre for Human Rights. The many years of its professional conduct have established the Centre as a well-recognised institution among the various minority communities, thus making the "recruitment" of participants for this study possible. My gratitude also goes to the individual staff of the Centre for their selfless work, which has contributed enormously to the human trust that is essential for the conducting of such a study.

Inta Dzelme

I. HATE CRIME: Context and Background

This Report

In addressing the core question of this study we must note at the very beginning that very little empirical research has been done on the victims of hate crimes.[1] While acknowledging the findings from other countries, mainly from the United States of America, Canada, and the United Kingdom, this report presents an account of the Latvian experience.

Hate crime is a complex phenomenon. Several authors point out the fact that cultural differences, social norms, and political interests play a large role in defining crime in general, and hate crime in particular.[2] 'Prejudice', along with 'bias' and 'hostility' are the terms associated with the motivation for committing the crimes in question.[3] And prejudice is a broad concept, covering a wide range of human emotions.[4]

Hate crimes are expressions of animosity toward entire social groups. The victims are virtually "interchangeable" as representatives of these groups and are often attacked by strangers.[5] An assessment of the ripple effect of hate crime needs to be considered for a more thorough exploration of victimisation: of the impact on the individual; on the family and significant others; on the social group one belongs to or identifies with; and on the larger community of the country.

This study is not an attempt to fully explain the complicated nature of the hate crime phenomenon in present-day Latvia. Nevertheless, its aim is to provide an account of the lived experience of hate crime by some of its victims in Latvia.

Intolerance in Latvia

At present there are no local studies available in Latvia on the experiences of hate crime victimisation. A study by the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (BISS) (Zepa, 2004) on ethnic integration and tolerance in Latvian society, however, provides some context on prejudice and social distance.[6] Public opinion polls conducted in Latvia in 2004-2008 indicate high levels of intolerance and negative attitudes towards visible minorities, guest workers, asylum seekers, refugees, and sexual minorities. Prejudice has been high against the Kurds, Chinese, Africans, Chechens and Afghans according to polls conducted in 2004 and 2008 where over 70 % of respondents wanted either to exclude them from entry into the country or allow them in only as tourists.[7]

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[1] (McDonald & Houge, 2007, p.35)
[2] (Iganski, 2002)
[3] (Iganski, 2008, p.3)
[4] (Hall, 2005, p. xvi)
[5] (Saucier, Hockett, &Wallenberg, 2008)
[6] (Zepa, 2004, p. 4)
[7] (The Equal Project. „Step by Step", 2005, p. 61-62); (Studio of Qualitative Research, 2008, p.9-10)

The Targeted Nature of Hate Crimes

The literature suggests that hate crime is most often directed towards people who are already marginalized in a number of other ways, based upon prejudices evident in the wider community to which the offender presumably also subscribes.[8] These groups face particular obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights:

> Violence is directed towards groups of people who generally are not valued by the majority society, who suffer discrimination in other arenas, and who do not have full access to social, political, or economic justice.[9]

Hate crime involves acts of violence and intimidation and thus is "the mechanism of power and oppression, intended to reaffirm the precarious hierarchies that characterise a given social order. It attempts to simultaneously re-create the threatened (real or imagined) hegemony of the perpetrator's group and the 'appropriate' subordinate identity of the victim's group."[10]

The underlying intent of hate crime is to intimidate and subordinate both the victim and the entire community of which they are a part, by sending a message that they are 'different' and that they 'don't belong.'

It is implicated not merely in the relationship between the direct 'participants', but also in the relationships between the different communities to which they belong. The damage involved goes far beyond physical or financial damages. It reaches into the community to create fear, hostility, and suspicion.[11]

> It is the symbolic status of the victim(s) that motivates the perpetrator. It matters little whether the victim actually identifies himself as a member of a particular socially identifiable group. In the eyes of their perpetrators, they symbolise a despised social group and the bias associated with that group.[12]

The Psychological Impact of Hate Crime on Individuals

Hate crimes are under-reported worldwide, providing limited information on the incidents. However, the existing data on hate crimes relies on those cases reported to the police, thus depending not only on the willingness of victims to report, but also on their ability to provide sufficient evidence of the hate motive to police personnel.[13] Iganski (2008) points out that in only a minority of hate crime incidents do offenders use force or physical violence. The majority of offenses range from verbal abuse to harassment, to assaults and criminal damage, and many of these offenses go unreported.

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[8] (Wolfe & Copeland, 1994, p.201)
[9] (Wolfe & Copeland, 1994), p.201)
[10] (Perry, 2001, p. 10)
[11] (Perry, 2001, p. 10)
[12] (Craig, 2003, p.117)
[13] (Craig, 2003).

Data collected over the last two decades reveals that hate-crime represents a severe threat to the physical and psychological safety and well being of its victims.[14] In fact, what distinguishes 'hate crime' from other types of crimes is that "all 'hate crimes' generally hurt more than general crimes. The notion that 'hate crimes' inflict greater harms on their victims is therefore the fundamental dimension in its conceptualization."[15]

Several authors suggest that individual victims of hate crime may suffer more extreme mental health and well-being consequences from hate crime victimisation compared to other types of crime victimisation (Iganski, 2008; 2001; Perry, 2003; D'Augelli & Grossmann, 2001; Herek, Gillis, Cogan, & Glunt, 1997). As indicated by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc., common signs and symptoms of trauma reactions and excessive stress include physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioural factors. [16] In order to assess psychological impact, these additional factors also need to be considered.

The American Psychological Association recognises that "this kind of attack takes place on two levels; not only is it an attack on one's physical self, but it is also an attack on one's very identity". [17] Thus the association highlights that psychological and emotional damage, intense feelings of fear, vulnerability, anger, and depression, physical ailments and learning problems, and difficult interpersonal relations - all symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder - can be brought on by a hate crime.[18]

Fear, defined by the Encarta Encyclopaedia (2008) as "an emotion caused by the threat of some form of harm, sometimes manifested in bravado or symptoms of anxiety, and prompting a decision to fight the threat or escape from it,"[19] is repeatedly suggested as the primary emotion that, following the experience of hate crime, alters the victim's choices in life.

Beyond emotional and psychological aspects, fear also leads to physiological effects. Momentary physiological change or distortion, such as accelerated or retarded pulse rate and heart action, body temperature changes, or changes in activities of certain glands, accompanies all emotional reactions. With the emotional degree of the reaction rising, the resemblance between the various kinds of reaction increases as well; thus, extreme anger, fear, or resentment have more in common than the same reactions in less exaggerated phases. Fear may result in a violent physical manifestation such as the quaking of the limbs or a momentary loss of voice. It may also, by way of contrast, result in an attempt to disguise itself by means of an assumed coolness or even bravado.[20]

In addition, extreme stress by definition shakes one's equilibrium, alters relationships, and breaks a sense of security. "Confrontation with deliberate human cruelty inevitably strains one's sense of justice, shatters the assumption of civility, and evokes alien

[14] (Noelle, 2003)
[15] (Iganski, 2008)
[16] (Mitchell & Everly, 1998, p. 34)
[17] (APA, 2008)
[18] (APA, 2008)
[19] (Emotion, 2008)
[20] (Fear, 2008)

(sometimes bestial) instincts… [These] profound effects, often transmitted to a second generation, are cast in the shadow of cruelty."[21]

Damaging psycho-emotional effects on victims may include but are not limited to:

• A sense of anger that is one of the common responses to being the victim of a hate crime. It arises from a deep sense of personal hurt and betrayal. Victims experience feelings of powerlessness, isolation, sadness and suspicion.

• Persistent fear as a response to victimisation. Victims fear for their own safety and for their family's safety.

• Fear can take on paranoid qualities and drastically disrupt the lives of some victims. One of the most common reactions is a sense of injustice, and a corresponding loss of faith in law enforcement and the whole criminal justice system, which is often perceived to be disinterested and insensitive.

• Most victims report changes in their lifestyle such as where they walk, how they answer the phone, reactions to strangers, suspicion of co-workers, and other such changes. [22]

It is said that the motivation of the hate crime offender violates the equality principle, striking at the core of the victim's self. The study by Iganski (2002) quotes a hate crime victim: "…it scars the victim far more deeply… You are beaten or hurt because of who you are. It is a direct and deliberate and focused crime and it is a violation of really a person's essence, a person's soul, because…you can't change who you… And it's much more difficult to deal with… Because what a hate crime says to a victim of hate crime is 'you're not fit to live in this society with me. I don't believe that you have the same rights as I do. I believe that you are second to me. I am superior to you." [23]

Victims of hate crime not only have the direct experience of the crime, but often also encounter *double or secondary* victimisation through biases and the blame of people and institutions they come in contact afterwards.[24] The fear of being treated unfairly and negatively by those who are supposed to help affects the willingness of the victims to report and seek help for recovery.

Iganski (2008) applies to racially motivated incidents the same considerations that Kelly (1987) uses in the cases of sexual violence, where the relative frequency with which such acts occur and not a notion of seriousness in terms of the impact of the acts on the women concerned is what distinguishes one form of act from another. On the indicator of potential harm–the emotional impact of crime–notably high proportions of victims who believed that the incidents were racially motivated reported an emotional reaction.[25]

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[21] (Ochberg, 1995, pp. 260-261)
[22] (Hate Crimes Research Network, 2007)
[23] (Iganski, 2002)
[24] (Herek & Berrill, 1992)
[25] (Iganski, 2008, p.12)

Repetitive phenomena have been widely noted to be a forerunner of severe trauma. Prolonged or repeated trauma increase survivor risk for repeated harm–either self-inflicted, when feeling like not wanting to live any longer, or by recurring incidents.[26] The pathological environment of prolonged abuse provides grounds for various psychiatric symptoms in multiple domains: somatic, cognitive, affective, behavioural, and relational. Chronically traumatised people are found to be anxious and agitated, and over time exhibiting chronic insomnia, startle effect, and numerous somatic symptoms. "Tension headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, and abdominal, back, or pelvic pain are extremely common. Survivors also frequently complain about tremors, choking sensations, or nausea… Nonspecific somatic symptoms appear to be extremely durable and may in fact increase over time."[27]

Research from LGBT Experience

Hate crimes against LGBT people often go particularly under-reported, although this is of course greatly dependent on the social context, including the legislation, attitudes by public authorities and society in general, law enforcement reaction to such complaints and trust in the authorities to which crimes are reported. As an example, in the U.S., a report of the American Psychological Association indicates that only about one-third of the hate crime victims reported the incident to law enforcement authorities, compared with two-thirds of gay and lesbian victims of non-bias crimes. The least likely of all hate-crime victims to notify law enforcement agencies are victims of severe hate acts (e.g., aggravated and sexual assaults). The main reason for not reporting is the fear of future contact with the perpetrators and of possible biases of the criminal justice system against the group to which the victim belongs; as well as the difficulty of identifying and proving an incident as having been provoked by bias is an additional obstacle to reporting.

Nevertheless, research on hate crime victimisation based on sexual orientation, documents that these crimes represent a serious threat to the physical and psychological safety and well-being of LGBT people: victims of hate crimes suffer more severe psychological consequences than victims of non-hate crimes.[28] The conclusions of several studies indicate that lesbians and gay men become victims of violent attacks more often than do the general population.[29]

A quantitative study, comparing a purposive sample of lesbians and gay men who had been victims of bias crimes with a sample who had been victimised on grounds other that their sexual orientation, found that the hate crime victims recorded statistically significant higher scores on measures of depression, traumatic stress, and anger.[30] Crime-related psychological problems tend to drop substantially among survivors of non-bias crimes within approximately two years after the crime, whereas hate crime victims continue to have higher levels of depression, stress, and anger for as long as 5 years after their victimisation occurred.[31]

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[26] (Herman, 1995, p.95)
[27] (Herman, 1995, pp.89-90)
[28] (Noelle, 2003)
[29] (Comstock, 1991)
[30] (Herek, Gillis, Cogan & Glunt, 1999)
[31] (Herek, 2008, Tiby & Sörberg, 2006)

Distress, observed among hate crime survivors, may result from a heightened sense of personal danger and vulnerability that becomes associated with the serious attack on a fundamental aspect of their identity as a gay man or as a lesbian. These findings are complemented by qualitative research (Noelle, 2003), suggesting factors that may contribute to the relatively more severe psychological impact of hate crimes. These factors include lesser ability of family support; a disruption of the LGBT identity and coming out process; damaged expectations about how one, as an LGBT person, will be treated in the world; a generalised sense of anger about the victimisation; and secondary victimisation.[32]

The Impact of Hate Crimes on Communities

The psychological and emotional effects of hate crimes are not limited to individual and interpersonal dynamics. Hate motivated aggression is viewed as a qualitatively distinct form of aggression, that includes the intent to harm, and for the perpetrators serves both symbolic and instrumental functions. Through the hate act itself the symbolic message of hate is communicated to a community, neighbourhood, or group. Instrumentally they lead to restriction of the behaviours and choices of large numbers of people.

About one-third of hate crime victims report behavioural changes both as coping responses to the most recent attack and as attempts to avoid potential future victimisation. They may avoid particular places, streets and businesses, or significantly change their routine activities. These recorded behavioural changes have included moving out of the neighbourhood, decreasing social participation, buying initial or additional home security devices, and increasing safety precautions for children in the family, and other.[33]

When an incident occurs, members of the victim's group, and the community, becoming aware of it, alter their actions and behaviours as well. People who are not members of the victim's social group, but also belong to minority groups, may behave similarly, fearing for their own safety.[34] Hate crimes thus have the potential to create entire communities of victims. "While a hate-motivated crime committed against a single person may adversely affect that individual, hate crimes also can create scores of secondary victims. These victims may be family and friends, or others who associate with the group to which the victim identified."[35]

Craig (1998) argues that retaliatory efforts will differ according to the victim's specific support group.[36] It is also likely that the perpetrators, as members of a particular social group, may feel pressured to behave in certain ways when interacting with either the victims or with members of the victim's social group. Of all crimes, hate crimes are most likely to create or exacerbate tensions, which can trigger larger community-wide racial conflict, civil disturbances, and even riots. There is the likelihood for hate crimes serving as a catalyst to initiate community unrest and to provoke retaliation.[37]

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[32] (Noelle, 2003, p. vii)
[33] (Barnes & Ephross, 1994, p.250)
[34] (Craig, 2003, p.118)
[35] (McDonnald & Hogue, 2007, p.8)
[36] (Craig, 2003, p.119)
[37] (Craig, 2003, p.119)

Support for Victims

In providing support services for victims, social reintegration refers to the usage of sensitive, understanding companions in the course of recovery from traumatic events. The goal is to be able to re-enter society without fear. For victims of violent crime the process of investigation can be additionally traumatic, as depending on the way the national system is set to function, they may be questioned, cross- examined, brought to courtrooms, and sometimes even forced to be exposed to confrontation with the perpetrators, for instance, by sharing waiting rooms with the perpetrators.

However, most victims of violence never seek professional help to deal with the psycho-emotional impact of traumatic events. Even if they would, treating trauma survivors can be a complicated and time-consuming endeavour. The implications of victimisation are profound, and deep-rooted symptoms can remain. For treatment of trauma survivors, many tools have to be applied. More frequently, simply the re-telling of the trauma story is not curative–the victims are unable to recollect without overpowering emotions.[38]

Therapeutic tools for how to most effectively evaluate and serve traumatised clients are continuously being refined by clinicians. One of the modalities, Post Traumatic Therapy (PTT) recognises that "traumatised and victimised individuals, by definition, reacting to abnormal events, may confuse the abnormality of the trauma with abnormality of themselves." Therefore PTT applies the principles of (1) normalisation of the experiences; (2) empowerment of one's diminished dignity and security; and (3) consideration of individuality, emphasising unique pathways to recovery. [39]

An evaluation of each separate case is essential, as medical attention and even medication may be necessary for some victims. When patients are overwhelmed with symptoms such as insomnia, panic, and generalised anxiety, intermediate discussions on broader matters such as 'the meaning of life' have little application. Professional help has to be articulated in terms that are specific to the individual, not general or abstract. Such support and assistance is essential to victims of hate crime, and a system that provides and strongly encourages such victims to seek professional aid must be put in place.

II. SUBSTANTIVE THEMES

NOTHING PERSONAL BUT YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE

Victims of hate incidents in Latvia indicate that in most cases the actions of the perpetrators were intended to single them out because of their belonging to a certain racial, ethnic, or social group. They perceive the incident as having been meant to harm their group and not so much them personally.

> I think may be they don't like us! They don't like us to live here, in this country… these people they don't like us… Everybody! They don't like us!

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[38] (Craig, 2003), pp. 250-260)
[39] (Ochberg, 1995, p. 246)

Yes, yes, [this happened] just because we are Roma! Everything is because of that ethnicity, just because of it! Because [towards us] personally there is no hatred, I think!

I never allowed myself even to think that it was against me as a person.

Actually, it was like the central thought–that very vivid feeling that he did not spit into my face as into the face of a human being… It is a very distinct realisation - that it was not against me as a human being. It is to show–that… the whole group is … bad.

In essence, that this person belongs to a group which the perpetrator thinks should be exterminated, that they simply have to be humiliated, that they are of not enough value. Maybe not even of less value, but simply: he DOESN'T LIKE them… because this person – by some particular characteristic is deemed to be undesirable in this society … or so it seems.

The story of a street incident in the Latvian capital Riga reflects the essence of the "You shouldn't be here" attitude against visible minorities by the general public. All other respondents spoke of somewhat similar encounters with the locals.

As told by the respondent, he was walking down the street, when a young man stopped directly in front of him, asking:

What are you doing in my country?!

I live here! I have family.

Why?

(Probably, he thought I am messing with his women.) And then I asked him, if he has (a) job, if he has family? He said–yeah. He is a student, he is 26 years old. He has a family. I do not remember if he has a child.

And I asked him "Why are you doing what you're doing?"

And he said *"You know, because you are in my country! I don't like that!"*

And I said—am I a bad person?

He said – *"No, you are NOT a bad person, but you shouldn't be here!"*

A PART OF EVERYDAY LIFE

Hate incidents happen in public places and can be experienced by the same individual repeatedly. As portrayed by a respondent, "The fact is that it is a part of everyday life, a common occurrence." These actions were perceived by the victims as intent to threaten, degrade and to humiliate.

The attacks on individuals range from verbal comments, facial expressions, and symbolic, discriminatory gestures, to threats and actual acts of physical violence. Respondents have encountered a whole range of insulting behaviours such as name-calling (i.e.

monkey, pervert, creep, slut, thief, dirt) in public; degrading comments and threats on the Internet; the publication of their personal information and phone numbers; being denied a seat on public transportation; rudeness from service providers in stores, coffee shops; intimidating threats on streets and from the occupants of by-passing cars; being spat at; being thrown stuff at; being chased through Old Riga by a mob; their children being intimidated, called names and beaten at school; the destruction of property (windows of the house smashed, home-made explosives being thrown into the house); to physical assaults in bars and on streets. Many of the respondents have been witnesses to the traumatic reactions of members of their own group or other minority groups, resulting from the hate incidents.

VERBAL ASSAULT

Verbal abuses are intimidating; they cause mental injury, resentment, and at times further escalate an assault.

> About five times a week somebody would say something horrible. Not enough to lead to a fight, but something like "pediņš" [pedophile], or "zilais" [the slang expression for gay- men]. Or, "Let's knock the gay's face in with a bat", or "Let's knock his eyes out"– something of that sort.

> Because of the words he used I understood that the confrontation was motivated by … his outlook on someone of my colour … being in his country. It was not like: "What are you doing here, foreigner? What are you doing here, a tall person, or a short person"–it was a racially negative slur where he began.

> There is a huge resentment that… that a human being is humiliated like that at all, without any reason! Without any! Simply like that–not even knowing them! That people are abused, called horrible names, marked for extermination!

Even more frequent than open verbal assaults, as reported by the interviewed persons, are overt behaviours or symbolic body language, perceived by the victims as rude and or threatening gestures, facial expressions of disgust, suspicion, and of rejection. Previous experiences of physical and mental threats heighten the level of constant tension and agitation in victims, keeping them hyper-alert in public settings.

> And I think that people do not understand that… that people of colour understand how white people look at them–there are certain characteristics.

> I think there is a lot of non-verbal communication here in Latvia, a lot more than verbal… For me personally–I think I encounter it at least once a week. If it is not spoken, then it is expressed in some other way–by a gesture, or a look, or something.

> This happens some two to three times a year… If you go somewhere–you are barked at! You are yelled at! Just watch out that you also will not be hit on the head! … How can you go anywhere? Just sit here! You are barked at–like at some dog, 'fui!' Only few are people like people… more are–like towards a dog!

In Internet portals, where there is anonymity, the expression of hate can increase in viciousness. From the victim's viewpoint, they tend to call for violent actions. After news of a violent attack abroad on a member of the Latvian LGBT reached the mass media in Latvia, Internet responses ranged from comments degrading sexual minorities as non- humans ("a gay is not a human!") to open animosity and bidding for more physical violence ("where do I go to bash the 'homos'"?).

The receiving of written threats has been another experience of hostility that deepens the overall sense of insecurity and dread.

> Of course, when someone writes me threatening letters... that is also someone who doesn't know me in any way... but he necessarily needs to announce how much he hates me... and... what he would like to do to me... yes, but that Latvian society is somehow quite aggressive...

> But these expressions of hate—very seldom they go from the verbal category to the physical... but of course... all these letters just increase the sense of insecurity. That you know that there is someone, in reality, who in some dark hour of a night will notice you, and will attempt to beat you up, and that sort of thing...

THREATS AND PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Respondents reveal that hate incidents are mostly solitary experiences. Physical threats and abuses tend to take place especially when they are alone or accompanied by just a few others. LGBT people, however, experience attacks also when they are in public places with their partners.

> I was by myself. And it is always that … when I am with someone … nothing happens, but when I am by myself, I am confronted by these people.

Incidents of physical violence in various settings have been perpetrated by strangers, by people unknown to the victims. In many of these assaults several offenders focus on a single victim.

> Only at night! Let's say, many know me here, I grew up here... they do not touch me... but if any other chigan[40] would walk around at night! Doesn't matter—a man or a woman—and you will be hit on the head!

> The interviewer: "How often do things like this happen here?"

> On Fridays and Saturdays you must be cautious!

Respondents have described the experiences of having been chased by a mob of skin-heads through the Old Town, of being threatened by a group of hostile youths on streets

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[40] In Latvia, the word that is used to denote the Roma members of the Romani community as well as by general public is 'čigāns'. Some Romani NGO leaders indicate that the more correct word in Latvian would be 'romi', which would be equivalent to the word Roma and its derivatives in other parts in Europe, as the word 'čigāns' has taken on negative connotations. However, the Romani people in Latvia use the word in official and unofficial conversations. In interviews conducted by the Latvian Centre for Human Rights for the report "The Situation Of Roma in Latvia" with Romani persons hardly anyone insisted on being called 'romis'. In: (Latvian Centre for Human Rights (2003), p.14)

and on public transportation. Again, there tends to be no prior history of contact with the offenders even when attacked by a single person.

> One night I was sitting in a bar… and simply… a stranger, who had thought up something… simply hit with his fist into my ear... Afterwards the doctor said that the man probably had a ring that cut my ear... I did not know that person nor I have ever seen him before... I haven't even noticed him... but so... I was definitely attacked!

Physical abuse happens more often than reported to the police; mostly the details of the incidents are shared just with the closest circle within one's community. As disclosed by a member of a minority group "It actually happens more often, people do not know what to do, it is what they report to me."

> I know people who have been attacked very, very badly … I mean—real physical attacks—in this year I know three.

Some victims do not report incidents because of their fear of secondary victimisation by police officers:

> You know, I was afraid to go to the police—that I will be ridiculed there.

This unwillingness to seek legal help has been reinforced by unsatisfactory encounters with police in the past. While seeking assistance or reporting a hate incident, victims have felt that they have received an unfair treatment, which has left them with an additional sense of helplessness.

> I go to police … and I tell him… They are asking–oh! They are talking to me like… very hateful like, yeah, and I don't like that at that time! I think–what's the matter? There some person beats me–I came for help to police, and they are doing like… very hateful, yeah? I think: OK! And I come back [go home]… They behaved like… very bad, that's why I don't go!

> The police … simply, it was obvious that they had received orders–to intervene only if someone is about to be killed … and that … that political stance is most offensive.

> The feeling was extremely unpleasant. It was that … that feeling of insecurity, because we already knew more about it–that in reality the police would not protect… The street was empty, all the people were crowding at this building, so in reality–it was wide open–if someone would have wanted to, he could simply walk up, hit, and run … And then I requested that policeman [for assistance], I was overtaken by despair, when he told me: "We do not have such orders - and we cannot help you". As if [his attitude was] "Go on, then we will see. If they bash you, maybe then."

> You feel completely alone, and you could be hit in the face at any dear moment.

NO ONE SEEMED TO CARE

A feeling of being alone reinforces the sense of victimisation at the time of the incident and afterwards. Many times the attacks take place with no witnesses. What hurts even

more is the fact that, even if there are people around, the reported experience was that they usually do not intervene. Victims feel that they are left to deal with their fate completely by themselves, with no support available because society in general seems to be indifferent to their experiences.

> There are always people about who do not see that there is a problem. There are always eye-witnesses, [but] who do not say, "No, this is wrong!" People are just very passive about these kinds of things.

People around withhold their help not only by passively standing by, but also by their unwillingness to metaphorically 'give a hand' even when asked directly. When help to escape from a physically threatening situation was requested from a passing taxicab, the driver refused to assist:

> "I won't take you [just] for the two blocks! If we drive, we drive, if not–get out!" I say–I will look, if I have the money. And he says that if I have no money, I must get lost! And he sees the situation, and is completely oblivious to it. [He says:] "What, you're not a real man? Can't you hit them [the attackers waiting on the street] in the face?"

This attitude of non-involvement by people in close proximity can be further illustrated by one man's story of being beaten up by three offenders in the central bus terminal at six o'clock in the evening. Many people were nearby, yet nobody intervened.

> I am waiting there, and sitting on this bench. And three young people (came up): "What are you doing?" And they are looking and asking "Why? Why you are here? And why are you looking at me?" I am saying, "I am sorry, I am not looking, I am waiting for my child. They are coming, after five or six minutes." But they are asking (me): "Why you are here?" And they start beating me. And they start (to) beat me, and after that… I fell down, yeah? And I … I don't remember that time … what happened, yeah? After that, I want to stand up, but I can't. I have … like … it is dark inside. And my mind is only thinking: "My child is coming now, after two or three minutes at that time," yeah. And I want to stand up, but I can't. Three times. And people, people, they are standing, yeah … But no one helping. No one helping. Not one ... yeah.

The uninvolved witnesses, who are about, add to the individual's perception of not being valued by the community they reside in. Among the victims there is a sense of being deprived of their very human rights to support and aid from the people around. The overall perception of having thus been denied turns into a sense of rejection. That results in a disbelief in the values of the society in general.

> The silence is the greatest problem. Their lack of … not only of involvement, but their lack of conversation … in this society.

> I think that is a greater crime than the actual acts of racism … My opinion about racism in Latvia—I do not judge the 3% of people that are actively perpetrating, but I judge the 97% [who are silent], because I feel that they are the greater problem. I think that is a greater crime than the actual acts of racism…

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS AND STRESS

Respondents report having experienced various trauma reactions immediately after the incident: startle responses, inability to sleep, intrusive memories; overall tension, anxiety and non- specific somatic symptoms; a fear of leaving the security of one's house, a fear of public places, crowds, fear of darkness, and a general sense of dread. Even a single episode of biased hostility towards them has changed the victim's perspective on safety for their lives. As revealed by a respondent, "before I had a direct incident, I think it was not that difficult… "

No, my first sensation was "run!" It was like some internal command: "If anything, you must run!" As if you hear it, or sense it! In situations, when someone approaches you, looking to pick a fight.

Even though not all of the respondents had had direct experiences of physical attacks; those who have been assaulted do not forget:

> When it really gets physical… I think that this trauma probably remains.

While some have encountered a single push or a hit, others have sustained serious bodily injuries. Hospital attendances involve treatment for concussions, stitches for cuts, and a minor facial reconstruction after being beaten and kicked by several offenders. Some members of visible minority groups did not seek medical help even after being beaten with metal chains and bars.

> After a few days I feel this thing… I can't, I can't eat–very difficult to eat… two or three persons were beating me… it's nothing for me… but that time–they hit me here [touches the back of his head] with some iron… and after that…

Serious residues in the form of somatic complaints and psychological trauma symptoms remain for several years. Victims report flashbacks, constant tension, anxiety, panic-like symptoms, hyper-alertness, and a chronic inability to relax.

> For me it was … about … a year for sure … hard to recall everything, but it was a body sensation…

> It is as if I can see [now] that mob from above as well as if I am in it–standing and talking–and they are yelling abnormally at me–that scene is very graphic, as if you see it from so many wild angles at once.

> Before–I was used to it–I didn't pay any attention. I even tried to laugh it off–because I thought–these are their problems–they are a bit … primitive … Yes, but after that incident–I simply became afraid–of these verbal expressions. Every call was already like a threat!

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

All respondents emphasised that they had psycho-emotional reactions that are long lasting, have permanently impacted their lives and that have surpassed the immediate physical harms.

> Well, yes, these are the most serious consequences! The physical ones–they would pass quickly, but the psychological consequences are the heaviest …

The most acute physical and psychological stress is felt during the first weeks after the incidents.

> I felt very strange… suddenly you feel very, very unsafe… that is one side of it.

> The following day - it was odd, but it was awfully uncomfortable to go out on the street at all–I was afraid! Really afraid! I had this horrible feeling when I went out.

Actual threats, violent gestures or hateful attitudes are often experienced in a crowd, thus large gatherings of people have become intimidating to the victims.

> The feeling all the time - that you are really terrified. Of people in general, and crowds! Of crowds … yes!

> People started to gather, ah, a dreadful pack of them, yelling… None of us at that moment realised… that awful hatred, and what these people are capable of… we were like surrounded … closed in - the two of us–and the crowd around us.

Hate incidents are seen as attacking a certain characteristic or even the very essence of the victims.

> Restricting who I am… How can I change THAT?

Helplessness and a feeling of powerlessness are immediately associated with the experience of victimisation. After an incident, any surroundings that bear even the remotest similarity to the perception of the assault are instantly perceived as being dangerous and hostile.

> Helplessness is the first! Yes, and the insult, for sure! *Humongous!*

> The first association - simply darkness. It could be seen as a metaphor: darkness in the streets, darkness in the peoples' minds, let's say–darkness … in the people's hearts.

The victims try to make sense of the assaults, repeatedly turning the incident around in their minds, expressing confusion and disbelief that anyone could be treated in this way.

> I can't believe that… I am talking with him, and he is forcing me… and I am telling [them], here, I am waiting for my child! And I can't believe they beat me! They hit me! Why? *[Chokes, almost cries!]*

> Feelings? Of powerlessness! And … yes, anger, in truth! That people can be that stupid … that callous … that in their opinion they can, and to such a degree hate the others …

not even knowing them … just because of some specific fact! That there are so many stupid people in the world who simply do not let others to live; in whose opinion they are the only ones with the truth, and that all the others are flawed—therefore they must be kicked … physically!

In trying to understand the circumstances leading up to the incidents, victims look for motives and reasons. Many times they blame themselves, finding fault in their presumed carelessness and apparent unpreparedness.

I wasn't on the watch out. That's why they came to me.

It can come [at] any moment—and in my thinking—I let my guard down before here, and… people came after me and tried to do things and say things. So [now] I keep my guard all the time!

After the incident the experienced loss of all sense of security impels victims to attempt to ensure that they will never again be careless about their surroundings, and that the next time they will not be caught 'off guard.' They make an internal determination to always be on the alert.

This is naturally what you want to do … to make sure that you are protected, you make sure that you react on time.

Of course, your eyes become sharper! Clearer. You make sure that you look allll *[emphasised]* around you…

The importance of being physically prepared for "the next" attack was mentioned by all male respondents. For some, this resolve has become almost an obsession and some men are building muscle.

Physically… look at me! Look at me! I work out hard! I am preparing myself…for… for combat! *[With despair, tearful eyes]*

I … have not hurt a person, and I hope I will never do, but I am aware about … what these people can do! I have seen …

Anxiety and hyper-alertness to one's surroundings, inability to relax, interrupted sleep and nightmares, constant evaluation of people and circumstances produce prolonged physical constrictions, somatic symptoms and pains. A sense of psycho-emotional heaviness and physical exhaustion are mentioned as burdens.

I was much lighter. But now I feel like I have a weight on my shoulders … I can't relax!

I can't … I can't breathe!

PERSONAL CONSEQUENCES

Creating Personal Safety Nets

Traumatic experiences leave one with a sense of endangerment and fear. Any sense of security about one's physical and psychological safety, surroundings, and future is scattered. In attempts to avoid a repetition of the hate incidents, the victims build their own safety nets. They become extremely suspicious, re-assessing their immediate surroundings, calculating their public appearances and behaviours, and taking serious precautions. Places are avoided or approached with great caution, and people are meticulously scrutinised before engaging in relationships. Even then, new contacts are viewed with distrust, and the social circle decreases. In addition, the lack of availability of extended family ties for immigrants and the overall small size of the various minority communities in Latvia lessens their possible outlets for the venting of feelings and receiving immediate support. The cultural norms and values of the victims also have a bearing in the decision not to seek further legal and/or psychological help.

Appearance

The victims attempt to alter their appearance to avoid being singled out and noticed:

> I used to dress in bold colours ... in this outfit and that … and then I started to pay attention, to what I wear.

> I shaved my hair off ... I had to do something immediately; already on that first day [after the incident] … I had to do something.

People

Having experienced rejection and hostility from the general public in various settings, the victims themselves and members of their minority groups tend to close in and rely as much as possible on considerably reduced, but more secure human connections. They create what they refer to among themselves as "islands of safety".

> I rarely find myself in situations that I do not have this community support! That is easier.

These exclusive relationships become a source of human connections in which to find ongoing support and which give meaning to the continuation of one's life here:

> My [child] keeps me going, [almost cries] my wife keeps me going, my closest family keeps me going, my friends keep me going … My extra-curricular things, and essentially working out ... because, when I work out, I calm down… and I try to focus on what I am doing. THIS–believe it or not–I mean interviews like with you, speaking to people when I actually have the chance to–this keeps me going! Because I have an outlet… I can get it out … and during that time, and maybe a couple of hours after that–I can kind of breathe…

> And those little relationships … those friendships, or acquaintanceships … also motivate me, how to ... not fall apart…

Only in the presence of these few loyal people do victims allow themselves to rest and play:

> And around them, around those people I can let my guard down. But [not] anywhere else…

> When I am in this kind of family and community support–it is fine, but how strange I feel whenever I go home alone, especially if it's late… I suddenly feel that … I am surrounded by strangers …

Some restrict their daily lives to the familiarity and relative safety of one's home and place of work. It is as if they literally live exclusively within these circles, keeping contact with any outsiders to the minimum.

> I feel like in some ways I keep a lot of people from me … [even] some who would like to approach me in a positive way. But I also feel that … it is those people who wanted to approach me in a negative way!

> I refuse to let people close to me … they have to prove to me that they mean me no harm.

> Psychologically… I have become …a bit paranoid … about strangers around me.

Places

Because of the reduced sense of safety and belonging, victims tend to become more closeted, restricting themselves to limited places and activities. They exit their homes only to go to work, and return directly. Additionally, the experiences of the hate crime victims get "recycled" and perpetuated by having to return to or reside in the proximity of the places, where the hate incidents occurred.

> I can imagine [seeing] those victims… going again to those places.

Free movement around the city, participation in or enjoyment of cultural and sports events are almost banned from their daily lives. On rare occasions, and with additional precautions, do these people allow visits to the houses of their closest friends or community members, or expose themselves to public settings, accompanied by someone they know and feel secure with.

> For a long time I would not go anywhere in the evening… I have no need to go outside the city centre, and so I don't. Only to the places I know are secure.

> Like most of the places I go I have been recommended. When I have to travel somewhere I am always with somebody whom I already know. Actually, I don't really remember the last time I have gone somewhere alone, by myself–actually, I have not done that for a long time, it is psychological …

Roma people in Latvia report that they have experienced unfriendliness and even hostility directly from their neighbours. There is resentment that complaints to law enforcement and social agencies have not produced the expected results. Even in small neighbourhoods there are cases of ridicule, of threats, verbal and physical attacks and vandalism on their places of residence, and an outraged sense of being neglected by the authorities and the society:

> (Smashed)… not only windows! But flammable liquid was put into a bottle, and it was thrown into a room with children, oih! And [I] went to the police and told—and nobody did anything! N o b o d y ! *[Emotionally, loud]* Is that justice? But if that child would have been wounded? *[yelling]* What then?! I just don't believe this any more!

Behaviours

Some of the victims have drastically changed their habitual behaviours. Others have started paying closer attention to their own actions, which include the readiness to face another attack. This constant alert influences a person at all levels: psycho-emotionally, physically, and with regard to one's worldview.

> You know, it is always this contrast! You feel how insecure you are–just moving out of this your comfort zone!

> As a result of it all, of course *[starts stuttering]* … I… I… I… let's say … I am afraid to go out in the dark even in Riga—because in Riga I have had various threats, yes! And then I become jumpy if anyone runs behind me … of course, there are some psychological consequences… and, … and … if I compare how I was when I arrived in Riga from Scandinavia, then … there are very few places where I go at all! Let's say—I do not want to challenge my fate … and go to any old pub … and, I go only to the places where I feel secure, and there really aren't many of those in Riga.

> Even I am sitting (here) with my back towards the people… but I am looking in that glass, on the fireplace … like in a mirror… and I am watching people walk in, maybe… it is very sad! I… it is … I can't breathe. I can't … I can't breathe! *[starts to cry]*

IMPACT ON FAMILIES

As pointed out before, the victims of hate crime belong to groups of people already stigmatised in the community. A fear for the safety of one's family and children is a big part of the overall anxiety. The impact of each incident spreads in a so-called *ripple effect*—onto their extended families, circle of friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and even other minority groups.

> And every person has had a dramatic situation, of racially motivated attacks to their family. And there are always friends and … you can't separate your family from those things that happen, that are oppressive …

Strained Personal Relationships

In mixed marriages, even when not directly targeted by the perpetrators or not having witnessed the incidents themselves, the significant other people experience the secondary effects of hate crime through the emotions, attitudes, thoughts, and behaviours of the victims.

> That is a painful question … because … it [verbal assaults and threats] does not affect my wife or my daughter … directly … but MY attitude … MY attitude … indirectly! Sometimes I come home … depressed, because something of this kind has happened.

As revealed by the respondents, hate incidents are usually not openly discussed--neither among one's own community, nor even within the families. Thus the interpersonal relationships are doubly stressed: while relying heavily on them for the need for support and security, true openness and communication are strained by constant fear and worry. Even knowing that their internal suffering somehow will be picked up by the significant others, the victims try hard to keep it to themselves.

> And in fact in the past I would try to tell my wife about it, but now I kind of keep it more to myself! Because–if I would come home every day, and tell … I would be putting it on the family, on them–I think it would be too much. I try to keep these things more to myself. Of course, I am a human being … the feelings that I have DO show on the outside…

Although the reason for this is quite possibly an attempt to protect one's significant others from exposing them to the trauma of the full physical and emotional impact of the experience, the constriction of both physical body and psycho-emotional consequences results in what could be called a 'loss of innocence'. This in turn lessens all ability to enjoy life fully, and blocks the feelings of ease and playfulness.

> I am no longer naïve

> I am less naïve about life, and less naïve about the future… And I mentioned several times: I miss my naivety!

The silencing of one's experiences impedes an overall openness and freedom of communication among members of the victim's family, thus at times affecting mutual trust and intimacy between partners, and between parents and their children. Often victims withhold information and even lie to their families, as this segment of dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee illustrates.

> Interviewer: *"You said that your children asked you what happened. Did you tell them?"*

> No.

> *"Have you ever told them?"*

> My child? No! Noooo! [If I tell] that maybe they also … see that they are different!

"You didn't talk to anyone? You just lived on? After this happened?"

[No] What [can] I do? What I do, then?

Concern for the Children

There is a deep bitterness among Roma and visible minorities for the way in which their children are treated by members of the general public. Abusive remarks and threats, directed towards the adults, are often rendered in the presence of children.

> I was walking with my daughter… What bothered me so much, after hearing people call me a monkey, or that my skin is black… is that my daughter was right there! She was asleep, and she was too young to understand what was said… but there was this total disregard of the fact that my child was there.

> And so… if people are that callous to completely disregard the fact that my child was there… to show their act of racism… then I can say that that bothers me more than anything.

There have been several incidents in which children of mixed race have been verbally abused in public places and even at a kindergarten. Teenagers with darker skin colour are being called names such as "monkey", "dirty", and "chigan"; they have been abused on public transportation, followed and threatened on streets, and provoked to physical fights at school.

> I feel kind of sorry, and mostly for my kids.

> And it is much easier to pick on children… because our children see themselves as they are part of here, they do not see themselves as people of colour, and so they do not understand what is happening.

> I don't want that [the children] ask about that; sometimes they are asking … "they don't like us, they don't like us (living) here, in this country … these people … they don't like us.

> Sometimes [my son] says, "I don't like to go to school"… I ask him why? He said every time, "they are beating me". They say: "Go away! You are chigan, chigan, yeah?" There are children in this cloakroom, they are beating him and asking "chigan–go away!" And too many times they beat him also.

Often it is hard for the parents to accept that they cannot protect their children in various settings around the clock. Regardless of the psychological weight of various safety-warnings and restrictions already placed on their children, parents still feel anxious.

> It's really a problem – because you can say, especially to children: Don't go out in the dark, don't go there, don't go there! But when it happens in front of your house…

> One day my kids will go out, and will be coming back late–will they feel safe doing that? Because… on the one hand, I don't want them to stay locked up in the house… but the thing that comes to my mind is … will they be safe where they need to go?

Concern about one's children turns into distrust towards the country that seems unable to provide for their safety. It is difficult for the parents to produce an image of a secure and bright future for their families.

> Of course, things might change! But the way it is now, when we have children who have been attacked!? This does not sound really very optimistic!

> The last time I walked past the Freedom monument, I just saw one girl there, and that image of my daughter immediately came to me ... Actually, that she was the one, just playing alone … and I think: "Will she be able to do that, freely?" And the fear comes to me.

Despair about the circumstances is expressed repeatedly in a determination to fight for one's children, and, if need be, to fight hard:

> If you do it to me—I am an adult! I have to respond in one way or another! But if you do it to a child or in a child's presence—there is no excuse! And that is what I mean with developing … a high level of insensitivity towards people in this country!

> As for me… I know how to take care of myself! I am happy that I have some kind of muscle, and people are afraid to hit me on the streets, but him [my son]… The most I worry about is… his future in general.

> Yeah! Anyone who touches my children—it is very dangerous! [Laughs nervously] With me—it's no problem, but my child! It's the last day for them! I don't care for them, anyone, who would touch my child! No! And … I am not afraid!

EFFECTS ON THE COMMUNITY

The victims of hate incidents in Latvia experience an overall sense of fear. A concern, equally shared by all victims, is that the people who can verbally express these kinds of intimidating things can also become very aggressive.   As articulated by a respondent, "My fear is it does not stop there!" This is emphasised   by the perception of restricted freedom of self-expression and movement, combined with the physical symptoms and psycho-emotional difficulties. This impact gives rise to resentment towards the government of Latvia and the community at large, and to a lack of belief in one's future opportunities in this country. It affects the sense of a victim's self-confidence both as an individual and as a minority group member living in Latvia. Some choose to leave the country as a direct consequence of this.

Resentment towards Government

There is a belief among the victims that in some areas the government and police have improved the situation, e.g. by creating more safety on the streets of Riga:

> There are some actions done that are decreasing the every-day racism on the streets. I never see a skinhead except for the Friendship days.[41]

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[41] LGBT Pride march

I think the authorities realise that things have to change. The police before, they used to say they have no experience with racially motivated crime. But now… I think my organisation has raised the issue so much that they cannot deny that there is a subject there, and it has to be dealt with differently.

However, the government is also being held accountable for not being sufficiently involved in the various problems and challenges of minorities. On certain occasions, individual government representatives are believed to having advocated against certain social groups, e.g., sexual minorities.

If the state allows it, then–it is like a green light for these aggressive youth … They want to fight anyway, so the willingness is there, and the motivation–the reasons that they discover for themselves–that changes … The government has given the green light: "THIS is the motivation, the reason why you are allowed to hit someone in (the) face!" And so they take advantage of this opportunity!

Among respondents it is believed that strong leadership and law enforcement are the primary means needed to improve the situation in Latvia. If the law would determine what actions are unacceptable, the population would abide.

I think the government simply needs to insist–categorically, simply insist, that this is a crime … That would be the most correct way, and also the one that would stop the hatred in society.

I think in the case of Latvia it has to go from the top down… I think that people still have the Soviet mindset, that "If you tell me what to do—I will do it! I may not understand it, but I'll do it … And after a while maybe I will understand it."

There is also an opinion in circulation among the minority groups that there has been a reversal of progress, that "things have become more sour" since Latvia joined the European Union in 2004. For some, it seems in some ways, it is more difficult to live in Latvia now, than it was a decade ago.

It is harder to be here now, than before.

It has gotten worse since entering the EU!!!

When we talk about these things, we have come to a conclusion that it was probably the European Union … and that's not a problem with EU–it is the result of Latvia becoming a part of EU. From…[from the early 1990s] to 1999, there were very, very few incidents in my experience when people would say something negative about my skin–maybe three or four –, that I can remember. But from the time of Latvia entering the European Union, three years ago, it was a daily situation, when people would yell, or…

Resentment towards People of Latvia in General

Some victims feel that the general attitude in present-day Latvia is comparable to that in other Western countries several decades ago. Many victims attempt to understand

the overall reasons for their having been attacked, by making parallels between hate motivation and some other indicators of ignorance on the general questions of democracy among Latvian citizens, who historically may have had limited experiences with diverse minorities.

> I understand, in some ways … people, who have had no contact, no connection; they may not know. Simply because of this ignorance, while it has no personal implications … as long as it is not your close friend, or brother, or sister.

> People have fears, it is natural for human beings to be afraid of what they do not know, and so…

> I do not see any fundamental understanding, first of all, about human rights. People really assume that human rights are just something like a buffet table: well, we will take some of these, but those we don't want!

There is irritation with signs of latent prejudice:

> (They) don't even acknowledge that homophobia exists here.

> Many are saying—especially after the first *Praids* [LGBT Pride march]–yes, that because of the Praids, homophobia was … enflamed in Latvia. I would not say it as this– homophobia has always been, simply with these Praids the doors of the basement were being opened, and the rats: intolerance, ignorance, yes, they simply ran out! And now they are visible–now they are crazy, these rats… But nevertheless, now they are obvious.

However, when ignorance, lack of experience and simply being uninformed regarding different social groups turns into hostility and even violence towards representatives of those groups, it is viewed as unforgivable. The people of Latvia are expected to take collective responsibility in acknowledging harmful actions towards those who are 'different'.

> When people call you names and try to threaten you–I really think it is something different … and that has to be dealt with.

Resentment towards People for Lack of Democratic Participation

Various degrees of anger, such as irritation, bitterness, or scepticism, are expressed towards the people of Latvia for not being actively involved in the building of a democratic society. Political and social passivity are seen as slowing development.

> And civil society in Latvia has not matured yet, it has not reached the point where people would understand themselves (as) being a part of the community. People to this day still live each in their own little corners: "What am I? What can I do? I have no weight in this! This does not depend on me!"…

Damage to Self-Confidence: Unwillingness to Contribute

The basic necessities for these minority groups, such as a sense of belonging and a sense of physical and psychological security, are not being met in this community. One of the consequences of this neglect is loss of self-confidence, and thus also of a willingness to further participate and to contribute. As it was most clearly explained with a quote from one of the respondents: "It is creating so much fear and negativity in people, that they think there are things they cannot do!"

> Not feeling free, yes.

> I mean (this) is not the way to lead their life, they want to be free, to do what they want to do.

> Also you feel, that living in such a society that can be so judgmental … that they will make [it] their job, their profession, their aim – to look at someone and beat them up, because it is not fitting to their comfort description of what people should look like…

Several minority representatives have been publicly abused because of their recognisability in activities aimed at raising public awareness concerning the needs of their group. Some have 'burned out' and intend to lessen their involvement in social activities. Nevertheless, they feel that they have contributed as much as they could.

> I have spoken and done enough.

> And also—I have done it as a duty–there is no satisfaction in this… that I am making my intimate life public, talk about intimate things, OK? But everyone is so afraid to talk about it, that I thought, it is my duty, simply!

Leaving Latvia

People, who have come to Latvia with hopes to make it their home, and to participate fully as citizens in the nation's life, have been disillusioned. For some, the sense of being discriminated because of their minority status leads to the solution of leaving Latvia in the hopes of finding the sense of home and contentment elsewhere.

> Like with this woman who just left—she wrote me an email: "From now on I won't be in Latvia." …Yes, of course, there are also economic issues—she doesn't think she can get enough money here, and she needs to take care of her kid …

> Very many are going (away)! Many! Every fifth or sixth! I don't know! Next month I will leave… and won't come back any more!

> You know… Of course, I say that I am leaving this country for professional reasons. But somehow I also feel that… I have limited opportunities here! Of course, there are many reasons for that! But moving out—I am looking forward to having a lot more opportunities than here!

> Every time I leave Latvia—I do not want to come back…

… I am tired… tired of running…

POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Co-operation

Working relations and trust among the various NGOs are emphasised as the way for building the basis for co-operation among the various minority communities and between minorities and the majority. As one respondent noted, "First of all (is) information… we want co-operation, we exchange information… You have to win people's trust, and then you can work easily."

> In this (given) society the thing that has to be done is–dialogue. It has to be a situation where people … become interested in what is happening around them… it does not matter if it is racial issue, or sexual issue… or gender issue… but to be interested in what is happening and having a dialogue. So far we haven't.

Another interviewee expressed the hope that members of the majority would change and be more interested in co-operation with minority representatives:

> There should be a revolution within the political field–and that means that some young people have to be really, really, really involved–young, intelligent, and well educated, [who] have travelled and studied in other countries, and have returned… they have to… study political sciences, and psychology… about law–and they have come back and they have to be a revolutionary, young, idealistic… who will be co-operative…

Building Human Contacts

Many believe in the fact, that all that is needed is a positive human contact. There is hope among the minority groups that if properly introduced and presented to the community at large, the attitudes would change, and the obstacles that prevent positive co-existing among the various groups would be eliminated. That also includes the establishing of a dialogue with the people living in smaller towns and in the countryside or, as one respondent said, "getting out of the metropolis."

> I just wanted to break up this barrier… Maybe also to show that… we really are people, and there is nothing to fear. To create situations where different people come and speak to children… so they would have experiences about people that are different.

Reporting to Police

It was agreed by the respondents that in order to better the situation in future, there is a personal responsibility for victims to report hate incidents to the law enforcement agencies.

> And then I understood that I simply have to go (and report). I wasn't expecting that they (the offenders) will be found… and that was completely irrelevant, even if they

won't be found. I wasn't angry at them personally–those young people, yeah? But I understood that my duty is to go–and to have this on record, this incident, as existing, so it would be.

Even if they try to talk me out of writing–because of their laziness, I should write that report, no matter, how...

I am certain that the police WILL HAVE TO treat it as a racially motivated attack.

Also, a sense of satisfaction for recent positive changes in the professional competency and attitude of the police was expressed by one of the interviewed victims.

He told me the police were quite friendly, and they took down everything that he told them. And they said they would investigate…

Help for Victims

None of the interviewed persons have sought psychological help regarding their experience of having been victimised. Only in the most severe cases do victims ask for immediate medical assistance.

During that time–[I tried] only as much as to forget about it, [to] forget that fear! I also did not seek any help–I did not need it!

For me, I always felt, that these are things that are so abstract, that I thought that nobody can help you!

The respondents expressed the view that the importance and benefits of providing proper and timely psychological help and counselling after a hate crime incident has to be explained to the victims and to their communities. Clearly, education about the symptoms of trauma reactions, the possibilities for help and support, and also—what benefits could result from talking to a professional, or having a compassionate witnessing, in telling one's story–is needed.

I mean the biggest problem is getting them to talk to somebody… Most of the time the victims… want to keep it to themselves… maybe people do not realise what they would gain from talking to someone.

It is NOT about healing them or hearing them … you know, people are always very careful about these kinds of things…

IN SUMMARY

The aim of this study was to look at the *psycho-emotional effects of hate crime*. As the interviews reveal, hate incidents create complicated webs of consequences affecting the individual victims and the whole community. Although the numbers of those who have been directly victimised by hate incidents in Latvia are relatively small, the impact of each individual incident is undeniable.

Yeah, this is trauma… and my biggest fear is that … if people would think-- there are not really many people, just a few attacks, it is just an exaggeration of [the] situation, they would say–yeah, yeah, it's just two attacks… but do you realise–what's in the mind of those people–even **if it is just one person a year… it affects his whole life**!

At the individual level the immediate impact of hate incidents on its victims is the experience of fear. In attempts to deal with the external threats and to prevent repetition, a considerable amount of personal life energy is invested into creating some sense of individual security. Appearances, physical fitness, behaviours, and habits are altered; strangers and certain places are avoided. People are scrutinised before any closer physical or emotional contacts are allowed. The daily lives of the victims, for the most part, revolve around specific, small "islands of safety" consisting of trustworthy people such as family and friends. A lack of extended families in Latvia and the small size of their communities, for some of the visible minorities, limits opportunities for developing caring human relationships.

Hate crime victimisation is experienced internally as an overall constriction of the sense of personal freedom and confidence level. This limits one's opportunities for self-fulfilment. The threat of being victimised again adds an even greater sense of loss of life's potential. With this comes resentment for one's contribution not having been acknowledged when attempting to live as a full-fledged member in this society .

I live here! I pay my taxes!

The feeling of being singled out and attacked is exaggerated by not receiving help from the people around. When others seemed not to care, the effects on victims were intensified. The perceived lack of concern, whether from strangers, from law-enforcement agents, officials, neighbours, or educators, has added to the sense of helplessness, isolation, and of not belonging. This has in turn led to a deep resentment against the whole society of Latvia.

Resentment about the fact that the attack has been made on an intrinsic part of their being (race, ethnicity, sexual orientation) turns into bitterness. When asked "what was the most difficult in this experience for you", one of the respondents replied: "This is a complicated question ... maybe in truth, the hardest for me was, that in reality ... such hatred! I cannot believe it, still."

Counter to the constricting effects of victimisation, the experience may also serve to encourage victims to engage themselves actively in the bettering of their community circumstances, and also to sensitise themselves to the suffering of others.

This probably is one of the elements that has made me… at the same time stronger and more sensitive—against the expressions of hate- of any kind. And more sensitive … not that I would personally feel the pain, but that… that exact hurdle of what can be afforded towards another, is raised higher.

Along the lines "Don't do unto others what you don't want to be done on yourself"… something like that. More sensitive in that I understand… that it can be very painful for that another human being, with some behaviours…

At the family level the consequences may include a strain on personal relationships. As seen in the disclosures, the burden of personal pain is practically experienced in solitude, while kept from the closest people. The inability to share, and thus to receive help, results in 'bottled up' emotions, depression, and considerable loss of the levels of self-esteem and confidence. This in turn affects interaction with significant others; there is difficulty in communication, arguments, and further constriction that disrupts these intimate relationships.

Having experienced direct verbal and/or physical attacks on themselves and their children, the scenarios of possible future incidents are played out in the mind. Constant anxiety for the safety of one's children and a perceived inability to protect them around-the-clock brings to surface a sense of powerlessness, of anger, of disillusionment, and exaggerates the emotion of fear. There is frustration at the fact, that, although their children are being born here and are inherent to this country, they are still singled out and threatened.

At the community level and in social relationships there is open resentment towards the people around, of the country, of the government, and of the educational system.

The overall well-being of hate crime victims is seriously compromised. Victim response to the hate crime experience is reflected through the internalisation of the threats—this response can be observed through restricted movements in the community and the surroundings. This restricted freedom encompasses the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions.

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Appendix A

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

This study touches upon three groups of people in Latvia, members of whom have been victimised by hate crimes:

    1 – Visible minorities;

    2 – Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, LGBT;

    3 – Roma.

Data Collection

The data was collected during July, August, September and October of 2008 through semi-structured in-depth interviews with six individuals (five males and one female, all in Riga city), all of whom had been victims of hate crime and with a focus group, consisting of seven members (three females and four males, in a smaller community), who either had been victims or had personal knowledge of victimisation of persons belonging to their own social group.

The interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using standard qualitative research methodology. The expressions of each individual respondent were not kept according to their belonging to a particular group; they were analysed together to form a collage of the human experience of hate crime victimisation. The emerging themes were categorised, evaluated and summarised, and are illustrated in this study by direct verbatim expressions from the interview transcripts.

Caveats

The aim of this study is to gain a preliminary insight into the experiences of victims of hate crimes in Latvia. There are still only few reported incidents of hate crime in Latvia, as the data available both of police and the Latvian Centre for Human Rights (LCHR) shows. Nevertheless, in those incidents that are known, the victims belonged to the three groups identified in this study. This is consistent also with general trends identified in studies on hate crime elsewhere, where the motivation in most cases is linked to the victim's race/ethnicity, religion/belief or sexual orientation. However, the parameters of the current study prevent a more detailed exploration of any or each of these groups in particular.

Establishing Trust and Recognising Vulnerability

Establishing trust was one of the pre-requisites of the study. During the first contact phone conversations the purpose and the processes of the study were presented, explaining the aim of the conducting institution - the Latvian Centre for Human Rights. The prior experience and credentials of the researcher were also introduced. The possible respondents were asked for input of their personal experiences, as victims of hate crimes. In some instances, considering the social ties, members of their social groups and

their significant others were contacted first and asked for their agreement and further contact information for the particular victims. Some people expressed an unwillingness to recall the initial experiences, in their own words, "to go back to the incident". After explaining that the purpose of the study was to collect data that will be used towards the further improvement of victim support in the future - a number of people reconsidered and agreed to be interviewed. However, several of the previously identified possible respondents had already left the country by the time that the interview process was formally scheduled.

Again, the necessity to establish trust during the first contact with the interviewees was essential for conducting this study. Keeping in mind that the focus of the interviews concerned personal experiences of hate crime victimisation, it was understood that the disclosure of painful memories could trigger emotional reactions. As a precaution against possible secondary victimisation during the interview process, the vulnerability of exposing one's personal experiences to a stranger was acknowledged. It was explained to the respondents that they have a free choice to withdraw from the study at any time.

Prior to starting the taped in-depth interviews, each respondent was asked for his/ her formal consent (see the attached Informed Consent form, Appendix C). The condition of trust also appeared spontaneously during the interviewing process.

> People might not feel comfortable to do something for research…They might not talk to you, knowing that it is research… also what the [minority] organisation wants– and you are writing about something… I mean–this trust needs to be established, somehow...

The respondents revealed that being victimised makes one feel violated and humiliated. The majority of the individual respondents were men. Some admitted, initially, that speaking to a female researcher added an additional level of difficulty.

> If someone would ask me if the victims want to talk… people are not very [talkative]… I do not know for women… but for a man—to talk about this… it is humiliation… it is really embarrassing… even to talk to another member of the organisation…

> I mean… men want to feel superman, like "I attacked!" and this kind of thing. And no man would like to tell you "You know, actually I am afraid!" or "Actually I am scared", or "Actually I don't like to go out", or "Actually I don't…" No! It is really humiliating—so you have to take this into consideration… really, this issue.

Language

The interviews were conducted in either Latvian or English, according to the choice of each respondent. For several participants, however, neither choice was their native language with the result that at times the communication limited the nuances of the feelings and thoughts from being expressed fully and in detail. The recorded verbatim expressions are unaltered, to preserve the original usage of language by the respondents. For the purposes of further dissemination, some of the responses, which were recorded on tape in Latvian, have been translated into English by this researcher - with all care being taken

to maintain the integrity and intonation of the original responses. However, the level of affect during the disclosures was made obvious through non-verbal expressions and body language, such as sighs, tears, gestures, and other indicators. In some places, when deemed essential to the understanding of the message, the researcher's observations and notes of these affective states are added to the verbatim expressions of the respondents.

Settings

To provide an environment in which the respondents would feel secure, they were encouraged to choose appropriate settings for the interviews. Therefore some interviews took place in restaurants or coffee shops chosen by the interviewees, or at their offices after-hours, and on several occasions in the privacy of their homes, where surroundings supported the normalcy of the semi-structured conversations. Sharing tea or a simple meal was often a part of the reciprocity. The focus group discussion took part in various rooms of a private house.

The average interview was about two hours in duration, on a few occasions followed by additional phone conversations or meetings. The focus group meeting lasted for four hours.

Appendix B:

Interview guide

1. In your own words, please tell what happened?

2. What dimensions, incidents and people intimately connected with the experience stand out for you?

3. How did the experience affect you? What changes do you associate with the experience?

4. How did the experience affect significant others in your life?

5. What feelings were generated by the experience?

6. What thoughts and images stand out for you?

7. What bodily changes or STATES were you aware of at that time?

8. What was the most difficult part in that period?

9. Based on your personal experience, how would you define HATE CRIME?

10. What helped you to endure/ cope with that time of crisis?

    Externally- people, places

    Internally- thoughts, emotions, beliefs

    What activities/ behaviors

"Have you shared all that is significant with reference to the experience?"

Appendix C:

Informed Consent Form

Dear Prospective Research participant,

I, Inta Dzelme, Ph.D., in co-ordination with Latvian Centre for Human Rights (LCHR), am conducting a study on "Hate Crime Impact on Victims". This qualitative study is a part of a larger study "Combating Hate Crime in Latvia and Czech Republic: Legislation, Police Practice and the Role of NGOs".

Any criminal act committed against a person or property, which is motivated by the offender's hatred of people because of the race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation is a hate crime. Hate crime can take many forms:

Racial abuse (threats or insults), which can be verbal or written
Bullying, harassment
Causing damage to property
Circulating or displaying racist or other hate material
Offensive graffiti
Any physical violence, etc.

The aim of the study is to gather knowledge on victim's perspective and the effect of hate crime. Analysis of data will increase awareness of the impact of hate crime on its immediate victims, their significant others, communities, and the larger community. This information will be used in raising the capacity of law enforcement in Latvia to address hate crime, to establish tools for effective policing of such crime, and to develop programs to help the victims. Your participation in this study is highly valuable.

For this study, I will be conducting in-depth interviews. I will ask you to meet with me two times for a duration of approximately one and a half to two hours. During the interviews we will explore certain questions regarding hate crime incidents that you have personally experienced. I am respectfully asking you to contribute to this exploration with your unique experience.

With this document I guarantee the confidentiality of your disclosures. Your name and your history will be generalised enough to protect your anonymity. I will also ask for your permission to contact you after the interviews if any clarification or additional information will be needed.

You have the right to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. After the study is completed, you will have access to the findings. Each participant will have the right to ask for a copy of the finished study. For participation in this study there will be no monetary reimbursements.

If you have any questions or comments regarding the study,

please contact me at: E- mail:… Tel:…