

Human Rights Agency Says UK's Racist Violence on the Rise after Brexit



London, October 21 (RHC)-- Racist violence is on the rise in the UK after the country voted to leave the European Union in June, according to a report by the Council of Europe. The Strasbourg-based council, a human rights and democracy watchdog body separate from the EU, expressed its concern over what it called a rise in "anti-foreigner sentiment."

In the report, the Council's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) lamented "considerable intolerant political discourse in the UK, particularly focusing on immigration."

"Terms such as 'invasions' and 'floods' were frequently used as well as the expression 'benefits tourism', despite a 2013 European Commission study finding no evidence that the main motivation of EU citizens to migrate was benefit-related," the report found.

The report provided evidence that anti-Muslim hate speech targeting women has rocketed online, through social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

ECRI Chair Christian Ahlund said that "the Brexit referendum seems to have led to a further rise in 'anti-

foreigner' sentiment, making it even more important that the British authorities take the steps outlined in our report as a matter of priority." Ahlund blamed British politicians and media outlets for the rise in hate crimes.

"It is no coincidence that racist violence is on the rise in the UK at the same time as we see worrying examples of intolerance and hate speech in the newspapers, online and even among politicians."

The ECRI criticized former Prime Minister David Cameron for the crisis, citing his July 2015 talk about a "swarm" of migrants trying to reach Britain.

In a referendum on June 23, nearly 52 percent of Britons voted to end their country's 42-year membership in the EU. Since then, over 400 people suspected of committing hate crimes have been arrested, a figure which is double the number of offenses before the Leave vote.

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