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Spain sets out plan to tackle rising hate crimes

Madrid.—Spain will create specialised groups within the Interior Ministry and the police force to prevent hate crimes and support victims, the government said, amid mounting public pressure to curb an increase in such attacks.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez chaired an urgent meeting of ministers, community leaders and police to discuss how to reduce hate crimes, which have been growing by around 9% a year since 2014, according to the Interior Ministry.

The meeting was called after a man said he was attacked last weekend in downtown Madrid by a gang who carved a homophobic slur into his buttocks.

Although the man later retracted his statement, homophobic violence had already been in the spotlight since the killing of nursing assistant Samuel Luiz, who was beaten to death in July allegedly over his sexual orientation.

LGBT rights groups plan to hold a rally in Madrid.

While attacks against the LGBT community have garnered most attention in Spain, other types of discriminatory violence, particularly against the ethnic Roma, or gitanos, are also on the rise.

«We must also work specifically to tackle hate crimes against gitanos, which increased by more than 57% in 2020,» Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said.

The committee agreed to increase hiring for the National Anti-Hate Crime Unit and will provide more details of a new three-year plan at a later date.

On Wednesday Grande-Marlaska said the normalisation of discriminatory speech on social networks and in the public sphere was creating a breeding ground for intolerance.

A number of opposition politicians have called for Grande-Marlaska's resignation amid the embarrassment caused by the retracted statement, accusing the government of rushing to conclusions based on unverified claims.

Queen Elizabeth says prayers for victims and survivors of 9/11

London.—Queen Elizabeth said yesterday that her prayers remained with victims and survivors of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States and paid tribute to the communities that joined together to rebuild after the devastation.

“My thoughts and prayers — and those of my family and the entire nation — remain with the victims, survivors and families affected, as well as the first responders and rescue workers called to duty,” she said in a message to U.S. President Joe Biden.

“My visit to the site of the World Trade Center in 2010 is held fast in my memory,” Elizabeth said.

“It reminds me that as we honour those from many nations, faiths and backgrounds who lost their lives, we also pay tribute to the resilience and determination of the communities who joined together to rebuild.”

On Sept. 11, 2001, 19 militants associated with al Qaeda hijacked four commercial airplanes to carry out devastating suicide attacks against the United States.



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