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## Reports of hate-based crimes, incidents level off in 2005

But more episodes  
target Hispanics,  
O.C. group finds.

By **CINDY CARCAMO**  
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

**SANTA ANA** • Reports of hate crimes and incidents remained steady for the past couple of years, according to a report released Thursday by the Orange County Human Relations Commission.

Law-enforcement agencies, human-rights organizations and higher-education entities tallied allegations of 152 hate crimes and incidents in 2005 – the same number as the prior year.

While the cases targeting Hispanics went from an all-time low of six in 2004 to 14

in 2005, the number was minimal compared with past years, the report showed. For example, 22 cases were reported in 1996.

Still, the upswing may be attributed to heightened tensions about illegal immigration, said the commission's executive director, Rusty Kennedy.

"I think that in 2005 we saw the immigration debate increasingly heating up with the Minuteman demonstrations and various organizations getting together around the immigration issue and calling for various different measures against immigration, and illegal immigration in particular," Kennedy said.

Some on the outer fringes of society may have felt emboldened to commit hateful acts

against members of the Latino community after listening to some of the anti-illegal immigration groups, Kennedy said.

Cases involving other ethnic groups did not increase in 2005.

Reports of hate crimes against blacks declined – 17 were reported in 2005 – but remained out of proportion to the population, the report said. Blacks, who make up 1.5 percent of the county population, were targets in 11 percent of the hate-crime reports.

Jews were targeted most often in hate incidents – 20 times in 2005 – according to the report. The commission defines an incident as an action or behavior motivated by hate but protected by the right to free speech.

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