

26 September 2016

THE CHURCH OF  
**JESUS CHRIST**  
OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS

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**27 September 2016**

**OSCE Human Dimension Meeting – Warsaw, Poland, September 27, 2016  
Working Session 12.**

**Statement of Francesco Di Lillo, Head of the European Union Office of  
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints**

Madame/Mister Moderator,

I am honoured to represent The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on matters related to freedom of religion or belief in this important conference. Thank you for the important work that you are doing.

Freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental human right. States have a responsibility to safeguard national security. They also have obligations to those displaced from their homelands by strife and persecution. Unfortunately, this year has been particularly horrific. The war on terrorism; conflicts throughout the world; the politicised use of religion. All of this has resulted in the death of thousands of innocent people by the worst methods. Women and children are the most vulnerable victims. Ostensibly religious terrorist acts have shaken European societies. The civil war in Syria and the fight against Daesh have resulted in the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War. In consequence of strife in many lands there are an estimated 60 million refugees in the world today, which means that 1 in every 122 humans has been forced to flee their homes and half of these are children.

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In response to these developments, some countries, including participating States and members of the European Union, have adopted or are considering prohibitive immigration laws and targeting religious groups with bans and restrictions. Regrettably, some measures are disproportionate. In the name of national security, the very measures themselves threaten the right to and enjoyment of freedom of religion or belief. In our worldwide general conference of April 2016, Elder Patrick Kearon, President of the Europe Area of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said: "Being a refugee may be a defining moment in the lives of those who are refugees, but being a refugee does not define them. [...] but our response will help define us." The Church does not have to look back far in its history to reflect on times when its members were refugees, violently driven from homes and farms over and over again. Recently, Linda K. Burton, President of our worldwide women's organization, asked the women of the Church to consider, "What if *their* story were *my* story?" Their story *is* our story, not that many years ago.

The Church is neutral on party or national political matters. But the Church is not neutral in relation to religious freedom. We would exhort the adoption of policies that encourage us to treat each other as children of God, in relation to the protection of religious freedom, in preserving the safety of citizens and refugees, and treating refugees as we would hope to be treated ourselves.

We respectfully submit participating States the following considerations:

- Freedom of Religion or Belief is a fundamental human right — one that is now protected in the laws of many nations represented in at this conference and around the world, as well as in global compacts like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948);
- Religious freedom promotes stability in a pluralistic society, but when limited, it correlates to increased violence and conflict. Wherever religious freedom is high, there is more economic prosperity, better health, lower income inequality and prolonged democracy. Religious freedom directly correlates with the protection afforded other civil and human rights.

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- Finally, with so many other religions and people of good will, we implore two things:
  - That freedom of religion and belief be protected as a respect to the humanity of those who profess any belief;
  - That all those who are forced to flee persecution or strife be treated with the dignity that we ourselves would hope to receive.

Thank you.