

OBSERVATORY ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN EUROPE

Working Session 7: Tolerance and Non-Discrimination I

HDIM 2017, Warsaw, September 14, 2017

Statement of the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians by Ellen Fantini, Executive Director

The annotated agenda mentions that this session will discuss the “ability of participating States to recognize victims of discrimination and hate crimes, acknowledge their experience, identify their needs and protect their rights.”

- The Observatory has previously noted the serious problems facing Christian refugees and asylum seekers in some accommodation homes in Europe.
- Last year, Open Doors reported the results of its study on *religiously motivated persecution against Christian refugees* in Germany.
- This year, Open Doors Sweden completed a similar study using a questionnaire answered by 123 participants and collected between February 22 and May 3, 2017, which was reported in June in Swedish and is forthcoming in English.
- All participants are Christians who were victims of religiously motivated persecution in Sweden.
- 85 % of the participants came from Iran, Afghanistan or Syria.
- 77% were converts to Christianity from another religion.
- More than half of all participants in the survey (53%) reported that they were affected by violent assaults at least once, due to their Christian faith. Almost half of all participants (45%) in the survey reported that they were threatened with death at least once and 6% reported that they were a target of sexual assaults. Almost all, 95% of the participants, reported that they have been affected by some kind of negative incident that can be associated with one's faith.
- Who were the perpetrators? The majority of the participants in the survey (96%) experienced threats, violence and harassment at the hand of other refugees or immigrants. Almost one out of four (23%) have been affected by some kind of religiously motivated persecution by translators/interpreters.
- Where did these incidents occur? The majority of the incidents have occurred at or near the Swedish Migration Agency's residences (81%). 39% have been exposed to threats, violence and general pressure elsewhere. Furthermore, threats, violence and harassment against Christian refugees have happened in all over Sweden, in all counties.
- The rate of police reports was very low. The 123 participants of this survey have experienced at least 512 incidents in total. Of the 123

participants only 33 persons reported at least one of these incidents to the police.

It is not sufficient for NGOs to uncover these abuses. It is up to the participating states not only to properly protect victims of hate crimes, but take proactive steps to recognize victims of discrimination and hate crimes, acknowledge their experience, identify their needs and protect their rights.

Many Christians in these accommodation homes have fled genocide only to find that discrimination, abuse, and physical threats have followed them to Europe.

- Recommendations to OSCE and ODIHR
 - Make the situation in refugee accommodations a priority; conduct research and surveys.
 - Prepare educational materials specifically addressing this problem
 - Work with NGOs to address this problem.

- Recommendations to Participating States:
 - Move Christians to safe homes as quickly as possible.
 - While separate housing for Christians is not ideal, nor a first choice, in some situations it may be the only feasible solution to keep these vulnerable men, women, and children safe.
 - Assure that translators are properly vetted and trained.
 - Educate and inform civil servants about what the Christian faith is, what it means to convert and what kind of consequences this can bring about, both in the event of a return to the home country, but also in Europe.
 - Provide refugees and asylum seekers more information about religious freedom and freedom of speech, what these rights mean in practice, as well as information on how to report incidents to the police.
 - Provide for the possibility of reporting religiously motivated incidents anonymously.

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