



OSCE HDIM WS 14

Tolerance and non-discrimination II, including: – Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions– Combating anti-Semitism – Combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Forum 18 and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee raise the importance of using a common, human rights based approach to Freedom of Religion or Belief in the OSCE's work and in the work of participating states across the OSCE region.

The EU's 2013 *Guidelines on the promotion and protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief* are a good example of the progress that is being made in advancing such an approach. These guidelines commit the EU and its Member States' to act both internally and externally to protect and promote this human right. On matters internal to EU Member States, Christian Solidarity Worldwide welcomes the European Commission's public consultation on *Tolerance and respect: preventing and combating antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe* and we contributed a written submission to this process. We recommend that this process remains firmly embedded in the framework of the human rights based approach of the EU guidelines, which is one of freedom of religion or belief for all people, everywhere. The upcoming review of the EU Guidelines should also bring welcome reflection on how the EU can better ensure the implementation of the guidelines across all EU overseas delegations to counter freedom of religion or belief violations against all individuals and to promote positive peace.

There still remain significant challenges in the area of freedom of religion or belief across the OSCE as Forum 18 and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee address in their statements.

Looking at Turkey, the erosion of the state's constitutionally guaranteed secular impartiality by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) is of concern for vulnerable groups and people, both religious and non-religious, who face state discrimination and social hostilities.

In Turkey's recent United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR), several OSCE participating states represented here today raised the situation of the 20 million Turkish Alevi, whose houses of worship, *cemevis*, are not legally recognised by the government. Others, such as France, called upon Turkey to '*Put an end to mandatory religion courses for the "Alevi"*'. This is not the first time that these issues have been raised and we urge Turkey to act to resolve them. Additionally, reports of attacks on Alevi homes and properties continue, often with impunity for perpetrators.

Christians in Turkey face the non-restitution of seized property; they do not receive permits to build churches, nor are they able to train their clergy. Converts from Islam can face delay and harassment when changing their religion on ID cards. Justice remains elusive; for example, for the families of the three Protestant Christians murdered in Malatya in 2007

or following the recent attack by policemen on St. Giragos Armenian Catholic Church in Diyarbakir on 7 September 2015.

The Jewish population has generally been able to worship freely and has received government protection. The government spent 2.5 million USD to restore the Great Synagogue and participated in the UN's Holocaust Day for the first time earlier this year. Despite this, social hostility to Jews is widespread and sometimes encouraged by inflammatory rhetoric by government officials. Responding to an anti-Semitic tweet by a Turkish singer in 2014 that said: "God Bless Hitler", the Mayor of Ankara responded: "I applaud you". Such sentiments are not isolated, extending into the media; this 'hate speech' must be addressed before it causes greater social harm as Dr Yildrem from the Norwegian Helsinki Committee will address.

The Kurds, an ethnic minority, also continue to face hostility and direct government attacks, resulting in casualties on both sides; the state's use of violence has also fuelled social hostilities, which include a spate of violent attacks by Turkish nationalists on ordinary Kurdish citizens. Last month, three Kurdish civilians, including a 13 year-old girl -were killed in the town of Cizre.

Recommendations:

CSW urges Turkey to:

1. Ensure that all religion or belief groups and their institutions can obtain legal personality and exercise their internationally established rights;
2. Effectively prosecute those who attack places of worship or individuals due to their religion or belief and provide the victims of rights violations with reparations;
3. Educate all public officials, including those charged with law enforcement in their duty to protect the rights of religious minorities in a manner consistent with the international human rights framework on freedom of religion or belief;
4. Monitor the implementation of the decree returning confiscated properties to minority communities, to ensure that the General Foundations Board of Turkey processes each application for return of assets quickly and fairly;
5. Remove the box denoting religion on ID cards in line with the ECtHR's 2010 decision in *Sinan Işık v. Turkey* in order to avoid further breaches of Article 9 of the ECHR.
6. Ensure the implementation of recommendations made in the 2015 UN UPR, especially those pertaining to Freedom of Religion or Belief and Freedom of Expression;
7. Ratify the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities;
8. Remove all reservations to international human rights treaties and uphold the rights outlined in the international statutes to which it is party; including withdrawing its reservations to article 27 of the ICCPR on minority rights, which limits the rights afforded to religious minorities;

CSW recommends that OSCE participating states:

9. CSW further calls on OSCE participating States and institutions to encourage and assist the Turkish authorities in promoting freedom of religion or belief in

accordance with the accepted international human rights standards on freedom of religion or belief.