

Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

WORKING SESSION 6

Fundamental Freedoms II, including freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief

September 14, 2017

Full statement

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Mr. Moderator,

I would like to thank distinguished introducers for offering their perspective to the discussions of this session dedicated to the freedom of religion and belief.

The freedom of religion is an absolute human rights which cannot be outlawed, suspended or relativized.

Let us recall that freedom of religion is the only human right which is singled out in ten principles of Helsinki Final Act. That being said, let me also stress that we recognize that freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and all other human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing. The annotated agenda seemingly seeks to establish antagonistic constructions of the relations between freedom of religion and belief and gender equality. With all respect to its spirit of inquiry, we prefer to refer to the positive complementarity that has always existed among human rights.

Promotion and protection of freedom of religion and believe succeeded to create inclusive discussions, consent and even consensus in the OSCE more than any other topic. Let us recall that last substantive human dimension commitments we have succeeded to adopt together comes from the Kiev Ministerial Council Decision on Freedom of thought, conscious and religion or believe 3/13.

This decision provides very coherent framework for cooperation among all participating states particularly it stresses that participating states committed themselves to promote dialogue between religious or belief communities and governmental bodies, including, where necessary, on issues related to the use of places of worship and religious property.

Armenia invoked the implementation of this decision on in one concrete situation such as use of places of worship. On 26 March 2016 the Turkish government confiscated St. Giragos Church along with its property in Diyarbakir Sur district, which is one the biggest Christian Churches in the Middle East without any consultations with relevant religious community.

All attempts of our delegation to receive any explanations and clarifications from Turkish delegation have not been successful throughout more than year. The incompliance with the OSCE commitments cannot promote either freedom of religion or security.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to make the following recommendation to all participating states:

To implement the Kiev Ministerial Council decision 3/13 in good faith and engage in dialogue with all relevant stakeholders to this end.

Thank you.