

2015 OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting – Working Session 14

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Before speaking about intolerance and discrimination on religious grounds, let draw your attention on one of the main lessons learned from Tirana Conference: talking about minority and majority communities has become out-dated because, as already pointed out by the Ministerial Council Decision No. 9/09, episodes of intolerance and discrimination affect both of them. A hierarchical approach – implying that acts against majority groups are less serious than those against minorities – would be improper: the inherent dignity of the human person is equally violated.

That being said, the situation of Christian communities in the OSCE area is serious and in some cases represents a real threat to the security and stability of the region. Especially East of Vienna there are recurring hate-motivated incidents and hate crimes against Christians that can even result in the murder of individuals. Profanation of Christian cemeteries and churches is a daily reality both East and West of Vienna. In this regard the ODIHR should be encouraged to develop and strengthen capacity building activities with regard to the protection of religious properties, including Christian ones.

Education is one of the key ways to promote tolerance and non-discrimination in our societies. Therefore the ODIHR may develop Guidelines for educators on countering intolerance and discrimination against Christians, as it has already done with regard to intolerance and discrimination against other religious groups.

Opening this statement I mentioned the Tirana Conference. Let me conclude inviting the participating States and, in particular, the incoming Chairmanship-in-Office to follow-up the past tolerance and non-discrimination conferences by convening in 2016 a conference at the appropriate high-level to examine in a balanced way racism, intolerance and discrimination, within the realm of the existing commitments.