

# OBSERVATORY ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN EUROPE

OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Warsaw 2011

**Working session 13:** Tuesday, 4 October 3–6 p.m.

## **Tolerance and non-discrimination II: Review of the implementation of commitments on promotion of mutual respect and understanding:**

- Responses to and prevention of hate crimes in the OSCE area;
- Combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination, also focusing on intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions

The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians monitors and documents such cases in Europe. Please find our research on [www.IntoleranceAgainstChristians.eu](http://www.IntoleranceAgainstChristians.eu)

We would like to thank the OSCE for the recent "Chairmanship High-Level Meeting on Preventing and Responding to Hate Incidents and Crimes against Christians" Rome on 12 September 2011. ~~We thank especially Dr. Massimo Introvigne, the OSCE Lithuanian Chairmanship and the ODIHR for their committed and fruitful work.~~

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Tolerance means to respect the other as a person, even when one does not agree with what the other says. Tolerance does not mean to accept injustices without speaking up. When we look back in history, even recent history, we look critically upon those who witnessed injustice of others and did not speak.

There is currently a phenomenon of some who speak strongly about tolerance, non-discrimination and diversity - when it applies to them - but do not grant the same to others and who take measures to forbid the existence or expression of opposing views or deeply held rights of conscience, which actively squelches plurality.

Many current cases of intolerance, discriminations, hate-incidents and hate-crimes that Christians face - and which we collect and document in countries east and west of Vienna - fall into this category and are perpetrated by those who do not wish them to speak, to act according to conscience or to participate fully in public life. Here are a few examples:

- We notice an increase in **vandalizing of church buildings and cemeteries as well as the desecration of Christian symbols** in several countries, esp. West of Vienna.
- **Religious people have repeatedly been attacked on streets**, mainly with insults.
- **Social marginalization** is often a result of declaring oneself a Christian. In the work place this has been a reason for discrimination in numerous cases.
- Problems are caused by so-called **hate speech legislation** – penalizing expression of the Christian faith.
- In the **area of education** parents' rights regarding the education of their children are being violated.

- Discriminations are occurring in the area of **freedom of conscience for medical workers and pharmacists** who, out of deeply held convictions to further life and health, do not want to participate in procedures that actively take life.
- Problematic is **anti-discrimination legislation**, which may **cause - as a side effect - discrimination against Christians**. A worrying example of which is the 5<sup>th</sup> EU equal treatment directive, which is pending in the Council of the European Union.

**Therefore we recommend to the OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE Missions:**

**1) to continue to recognize and condemn the problem of discrimination against Christians in its different features**, in countries of the OSCE both East and West of Vienna,

**2) We recommend to the OSCE/ODIHR and OSCE Missions to regularly hold meetings such as the expert meeting on hate crimes against Christians, as well as to put structures in place for a long term response by an increased focus on the issues with regard to:**

- **Data-collecting (TANDIS)**
- **Awareness-raising**
- **Assessing legislation and policies of participating States** in view of discrimination and intolerance against Christians as regards content, interpretation and application of pending and existing laws.

**We call upon the participating states:**

**1) to ensure that "a public debate on intolerance and discrimination against Christians be initiated and that the right of Christians to participate fully in public life be ensured" - paying special attention to the problem of hate speech legislation**

**2) to put into action the recent OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on "Combating Intolerance and Discrimination Against Christians in the OSCE Area". This document is a milestone and must not be overlooked.**

**4) to encouraging the media, in its key role of public awareness building, not to enflame prejudices or negative stereotypes, including those against Christians.**

**Thank you for your attention**

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