



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on the Release of the July to December 2010 International Religious Freedom Report

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires, a. i. Gary D. Robbins
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 15, 2011

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

On Tuesday, September 13, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton transmitted to the United States Congress the July to December 2010 Report on International Religious Freedom. We hope this report will serve as a useful resource for delegations and the OSCE Secretariat.

The annual report highlights both the admirable protections for, and the unjust violations of, religious freedom across the globe. Throughout the OSCE region, the report reflects concerns regarding anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim sentiment; increasing restrictions on religious expression, such as bans on attire; and the justification of restrictions due to national security concerns. In numerous countries, the administration and requirement of formal registration obstructs the activity of certain religious groups. The report addresses police raids and arrests for peaceful religious activity. It also highlights improvements in some participating States.

We welcome the opportunity to collaborate on initiatives that improve religious freedom and promote religious tolerance. But we should be equally wary of efforts to criminalize statements or publications deemed offensive to a particular religion.

Through our bilateral relationships, our work in international fora, and our ongoing engagement with NGOs, religious groups, civil society leaders, and scholars, the United States will continue to actively promote religious freedom for all as essential to human dignity, a robust civil society, and democratic development.

It is our hope that the International Religious Freedom Report will encourage existing religious freedom movements in the OSCE Region and promote dialogue among governments and within societies on how best to accommodate religious communities and protect each individual's right to religious freedom. It is another valuable tool to assist participating States in the evaluation of their efforts to fulfill our common commitments.

This year, we published the report on our website www.humanrights.gov which will be included in our distributed statement.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.