

REPORT POINTS (Bishop Dmitry Shatrov)

1. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues! My name is Dmitry Shatrov, I'm a pastor of a Pentecostal church in Saint-Petersburg, Russia. I was born in the fourth generation of a family, whose members spent more than one prison term lasting 10-20 years for their faith.

When nursery teachers pierced my tongue with a needle (because I was telling my kindergarten friends about my faith), they didn't know it served as a vaccination against fear of telling the truth and expressing my thoughts and beliefs! I had similar experiences both in school (mockery, bullying, insults) and in college (they threatened to expel me, or to deprive me of my academic credentials). When we went through raids of people trying to take away our church real property and our TV channel (at that time I was one of the owners of this TV channel), where we broadcasted religious programs two hours a day for 15 years, we were able to win the court cases for our right to own these buildings and right to keep our broadcasting license. Afterwards the head partner decided to sell the shares of this media channel, so we sold it to the government of the city of Moscow. But even after that I had remained a CEO of the channel "TVC-Saint-Petersburg" and had continued to broadcast my Christian programs for seven more years.

It is hard for me to speak about religious rights and freedoms violation in Russian Federation in view of the fact that our church has acquired a building on Nevsky Prospect, right in the centre of Saint-Petersburg (where our multi-thousand members church is holding its services to the present day). This building used to be a cinema, although originally Emperor Nikolai II had built it for religious purposes. However Europe sees a reverse processes: many temples become bars and entertainment centers, in spite of the fact that many Christian congregations were ready to take them and use them according to their original design.

2. Religious organizations in modern Russia don't face an opposition, that could be justly named "religious persecutions", as it was in the Soviet Union, whose leaders had been pursuing an anti-religious policy despite of the fact that the Soviet Constitution of 1936 has been considered one of the most democratic constitutions, and declared freedom of conscience. Nevertheless, we are worried by some amendments to the Law "On freedom of conscience and religious organizations", passed by the Russian State Duma in July 2016, often referred to as the "Yarovaya Law" by mass-media. Most experts and representatives of the religious organizations state that these regulations stand in opposition to the Russian Constitution and some other federal laws. When signing those amendments into action, the President of Russia said, that in a while we need to conduct a re-evaluation of practical application of these amendments, and modify them if need be. After three years we are sure that Russian Federation has enough good will to revise this law and bring it into accordance with the Constitution and international law regulations in sphere of freedom of conscience and religion.

3. By the beginning of the 21 century we see a significant progress in the sphere of establishment of peace and reconciliation between states, peoples, religions and different social groups, partly owing to the work of such international organizations as OSCE. However we have to address again the issue of rising Christiano-phobia and its consequences. Some countries not only infringe upon the rights of Christians, enacting laws against their right to confess and proclaim their beliefs, but there are murders happening for belonging to a Christian church or converting into Christianity from other religion. I consider it necessary to accelerate the signing of OSCE Declaration on inadmissibility of Christiano-phobia, that Russian delegation has being urging upon at least since 2016. Russian Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Sergey Lavrov has been repeating the same thing multiple times as well.

HAMBURG, GERMANY, December 9, 2016, Russia supported declarations against inadmissibility of antisemitism. Foreign Affairs Minister of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergey Lavrov has stated this following the results of the OSCE Council of Foreign Ministers session held on December 9:

«As for decision on antisemitism, we support these declarations. We regret that identical declarations against Islamophobia and Christianophobia are not yet passed. There was an initiative in 2016 to approve a definition of antisemitism. We are not against it, however this proposal has been very original one - to approve a definition, described by one of the non-governmental organizations. I don't have anything against it, I'm not against the definition itself, but not many OSCE members are part of this organisation», — Mr. Lavrov said.

In conclusion, I think it is important to note that by protecting the gay rights both Europe and the USA neglect the rights of those people who don't want to participate in gay events because of their beliefs, that is they refuse to rent their facilities for gay weddings, or make a "wedding" cake for their celebration. Unfortunately, the number of such cases is on the rise.

Thank you for your attention!