

OBSERVATORY ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN EUROPE

The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians documented over 800 incidents of intolerance and discrimination against Christians „West of Vienna“ in the past six years. In a fragmented landscape of social hostility, negative stereotyping, vandalism, hate incidents and more or less subtle government restrictions, a concerning pattern becomes visible.

We are very grateful to OSCE and ODIHR for the seriousness with which the problem of intolerance and discrimination against Christians is handled. We applaud OSCE for seeking solutions through numerous meetings and documents, such as the expert round table in Vienna in 2009, two seminars on how to combat hate incidents against Christians in 2010 and 2011, a parliamentary assembly resolution in 2011,¹ and several statements of the ministerial council.

If you check for violations of freedom of assembly of Christians on our website www.IntoleranceAgainstChristians.eu, you will find numerous hate incidents:

Christians events, prayer meetings or Church services as well as Christian manifestations which are being interrupted or attacked. These groups include the radical left, anti-religion groups, antifa groups, radical feminists groups or radical LGBT activist.

We recorded such hate incidents for example in Austria, Germany and Spain. A female Dutch participant at the Catholic World Youth Day in Madrid reported to the Observatory: *I "was verbally (and almost physically) attacked during World Youth Day in Madrid in August 2011 by a group anarchists who shouted at me and at the others in my group at a metro station and one of the anarchists wanted to beat me but somebody from our group protected me."*

The methods include insult shouted in chorals – such as „*If Mary had had an abortion, we would have been spared of you*“ – or drawings of a *crucified pig* on billboards. Incitement to violence, overboarding noise to make public speaking impossible, as well as the blocking of roads or doors of conference halls, material damage and even physical attacks are not uncommon.

¹ June 26-27, 2012, OSCE/ODIHR on the role of civil society in combating Hate Crimes against Christians; September 12, 2011, OSCE High-Level Meeting on Preventing and Responding to Hate Incidents and Crimes against Christians; July 2011: OSCE Parliamentary Assembly urges states to combat intolerance and discrimination against Christians in the West; March 4, 2009: OSCE Round Table in Vienna on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians; 2005, 2006 and 2007: the Ministerial Council of OSCE emphasizes to combat intolerance against religion, including Christianity.

Hardly, we see perpetrators brought to justice.

Often, attacking groups receive funding by governments.

With regard to pro-life manifestations, we are worried that governments or local courts are considering to establish banning miles around abortion facilities, which constitutes in itself a violation of freedom of assembly. If there is not a very compelling reason, a so-called „banning mile“ which prohibits „picketing“ or „side-walk counselling“ is not justified. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Resolution of July 2011 recommends to assess legislation in the participating States, including laws on freedom of assembly² so „that the right of Christians to participate fully in public life be ensured.“

Our recommendations to OSCE/ODIHR and participating states:

- We recommend to participating states not prohibit or geographically limit right to life – manifestations or sidewalk counselling in front of abortion facilities.
- We recommend to participating states to assess the funding they give to radical anti-religion, radical feminist or radical LGBT NGOs, and to withdraw these funds if there is evidence that they infringe upon freedom of assembly.
- We recommend to OSCE and participating states: to improve the training and raise awareness for law enforcement officers, so that the perpetrators will be found and brought to justice - because what is happening is not just a polite disagreement.

To conclude I would like to offer to all of you our research, documentations and reports, which you find on our website, as well as any cooperation to OSCE and participating states and NGO representatives to work together towards a protection of rights and freedoms of all people, including Christians.

Contact us!

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² The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly recommended in July 2011 in Belgrade 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" (12); that "in view of discrimination and intolerance against Christians, that legislation in the participating States, including labour law, equality law, laws on freedom of expression and assembly, and laws related to religious communities and right of conscientious objection be assessed" (13); and "encourages the media not to spread prejudices against Christians and to combat negative stereotyping" (15).