



**Intervention of
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OSCE HDIM Working Session 10: Tolerance and Non-discrimination**

As the Founder and President of the Institute on Religion and Public Policy, I am honored to address the OSCE concerning the state of religion in the region since the last HDIM. The Institute has submitted reports on troubling religious freedom situations in over 20 OSCE member states. These reports are available on the table outside.

The commitment of the OSCE and its member states to advance freedom of religion and belief is fundamental to the core mission of the OSCE itself. Freedom of religion is the cornerstone of democracy, and the OSCE has committed tremendous time, energy, and resources – and appropriately so – to this fundamental right.

OSCE member states acknowledge the centrality of this issue with the appointment of the three special representatives of the Chair in Office and with the continuing functioning of the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion and Belief.

However, these institutions must be strengthened and granted greater assets in order to more fully carry out their missions.

The Institute on Religion and Public Policy calls on the OSCE and its member states to:

1. Institutionalize with permanent mandates the three special representatives of the Chairman in Office to promote greater tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination (Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions; Personal Representative on Combating anti-Semitism; and Personal Representative on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims). Their permanent mandate will strengthen the OSCE's capacity to advance fundamental rights in an ongoing and uninterrupted manner.

2. Provide greater resources to the three special representatives of the Chairman in Office to promote greater tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination. These resources must include permanent staff to each special representative to assist them in the fulfillment of their mandates, as well as funds for research, travel, and publications.
3. Amend the mandates of the special representatives of the Chairman in Office to promote greater tolerance and combat racism, xenophobia and discrimination to coincide with those of the United Nations special rapporteurs in order to grant the special representatives investigative authority, site visit opportunities, and permanent structures to allow them to fulfill their mandates in the most effective means possible.
4. Grant greater resources and staff to the Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion and Belief to assist with the development of religion laws in keeping with OSCE commitments to religious freedom, education on freedom of religion and belief within OSCE member states, and advance the protection of individual rights within the OSCE region.

The commitment and dedication of the OSCE to the protection and promotion of fundamental rights is clear and evident. These steps will permit the OSCE more effectively and directly advance its commitments to the most basic fundamental right, that of religious freedom.