

**Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe**  
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Among the challenges and threats faced by the development of the society today one can name the intensification of religious extremism. It happens not only in remote regions of the world but also in member countries of the OSCE. The changes in the socio-political system of the Middle East and North Africa countries and the weakening of national governments have actually created conditions favourable for a reinforcement of religious extremist groups who seek to assert themselves in the society through violence against the faith of those who adhere to different religious traditions.

The Russian Orthodox Church has followed with great concern the developments with regard to the situation of the Christian population in a number of countries where Christians are subjected to persecution and discrimination. Today more and more reports are coming about the cases of defilement of Christian churches and violence against Christians. Christianophobia just as Islamophobia and anti-Semitism has become a serious problem impeding the development of the society. Religiously tinged extremism makes it impossible to build a just human community life based on respect for human rights, freedom and dignity. Since where violence is committed against human conscience and therefore human dignity there are neither rights nor freedoms of the individual.

It is insufficient today only to monitor the situation of Christians in the world and to calculate the sad statistics. The world community in the person of international organizations is called to pro-actively join in the search of a way out of this growing problem. Some European international organizations have already voiced their support for persecuted Christians. Among them is the European Parliament, which in its Resolution of January 20, 2011, condemned the persecution of Christians in the world. We call upon the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to come out in the same open and honest way in the defence of oppressed Christians and to include Christianophobia in the list of topics to be discussed at this authoritative international forum. The OSCE is called to activate all the legal leverage at its disposal, including direct dialogue with the authorities, religious communities and public in the countries in which cases of violence against Christians continue to take place. It is necessary to establish an atmosphere of solidarity and intolerance towards this evil.

There is a need to set up a special council within the OSCE to work out recommendations for building a policy of opposing Christianophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. This council could include representatives of not only the OSCE but also traditional world religions, as well analysts and scholars of religion. In addition, it is necessary to use the potential of traditional religious communities themselves and their appeal to a peaceful and mutually respectful co-existence of people of different religious traditions.

In this connection, we welcome the high-level meeting on Preventing and Responding to Hate Incidents and Crimes against Christians, which took place on September 12, 2011, in Rome, on the initiative of the present OSCE Parliament Assembly president as it became one of the first issue events of the OSCE on the problem of Christianophobia. The stand of the Russian Orthodox Church voiced at that meeting by the chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, compels all those who are not indifferent to unite in opposing the growing Christianophobia in the world.

People's right to confess their faith freely and without fear should be defended as one of the human fundamental rights and freedoms, while violence against religious conscience should be seen as a grave crime against the human personality.