



# HOLY SEE

Statement by Monsignor Anthony R. Frontiero  
Official of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace  
At the 2008 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting  
6 October 2008, Warsaw

## During Working Session 10: Combating Hate Crimes Against Christians and Members of Other Religions

Mr. Moderator,

Each year at this distinguished gathering, government and civil society representatives come here to discuss the prospects for creating a better world, where human rights will be respected, promoted and protected. The Holy See is pleased take an active part in these discussions, and to contribute its particular wisdom and experience of service to the human family in this regard. The issue of religious freedom, of course, and the right to believe in God and to practice that belief, is a fundamental human right, one that is very much a part of the OSCE commitments and which will be formally addressed during tomorrow's agenda.

Yet, the right to religious liberty continues to be trampled upon. Hate crimes, as well as incidents of intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions continue to be witnessed throughout the OSCE region and beyond. The recent outbreak of violence and the murder of Catholic priests and religious in India is a sobering reminder of that reality. Often these crimes happen without adequate responses from government authorities. Indeed, in some regions it is civic authorities themselves that open the door to hate motivated crimes against clergy and religious congregations. Across the OSCE region, many individuals and groups face restrictions on their right to freedom of religion or belief. Acts of discrimination against individuals in the work place and public services, defamation campaigns against minority religious groups, the disruption or prohibition of worship even in private homes, censorship of religious literature, the systematic abuse of registration rules and procedures intended to infringe on the rights of entire faith communities, and the imprisonment and/or expulsion of clergy and individuals who profess religious beliefs considered illegitimate by the civil or other religious authorities, are examples of how much more work must be done in order to stop the cycle of violence and hatred, and to ensure the equal protection of human rights under the law for all people.

The Holy See has expressed its deep concern over these situations in a concrete way through its active participation in the meetings of the National Points of Contact on combating hate crime organized by the ODIHR, and by joining in the comprehensive consultation process on this issue

with governments and civil society alike. While the Holy See appreciates the efforts of the OSCE and ODIHR in combating hate crimes, it is increasingly concerned that the ODIHR is moving away from its strong commitment to combating hate crimes against Christians and members of other religions, and shifting its focus instead, and without the consensus of participating States, to other concerns. Hate crimes, intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions continue all too frequently and yet the ODIHR is increasingly downplaying these incidents and promoting other agendas that do not find a mandate in the OSCE commitments. This is abundantly clear from the 2007 *Annual Report on Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region—Incidents and Responses*, and it is cause for alarm for the Delegation of the Holy See, which has repeatedly asked the ODIHR to refrain from putting the incidents of Christians and members of other religions on the back burner, and to remain appropriately focused on this OSCE agreed commitments. This said, the Holy See reiterates its call for a more balanced and transparent approach on the part of the ODIHR, in accordance with Ministerial Decisions and existing commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.