



## **Conference on enhancing efforts to prevent and combat intolerance and discrimination against Christians, focusing on hate crimes, exclusion, marginalisation and denial of rights**

**Vienna May 18, 2015**

OSCE participating States recognize that manifestations of discrimination and intolerance threaten the security of individuals and may give rise to wider scale conflict and violence that undermine international stability and security. Today, there are a broad range of commitments to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, discrimination and intolerance, including against Muslims, Christians, and Jews and to prevent and respond to hate crimes. The OSCE Chairperson-in-Office first specifically mentioned intolerance against Christians in a declaration emerging from the 2005 Cordoba Conference; this was followed by a number of Ministerial Council Decisions that sought to develop an Organization-wide response for countering discrimination and intolerance against Christians.<sup>1</sup>

While underlining the importance of a comprehensive approach to address discrimination and hate crimes, OSCE participating States have also acknowledged specificities of different forms of intolerance, including against Christians and members of other religions. The Cordoba Declaration by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, emerging from the 2005 Cordoba Conference, was the first time the issue of intolerance against Christians was specifically taken up by the OSCE in a high-level statement. In the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 10/05, participating States committed to fight prejudice, intolerance and discrimination against *inter alia* Christians and members of other religions.

Additionally, ODIHR's annual reports on *Hate Crimes in the OSCE Region-Incidents and Response*, document that lack of confidence in respective criminal justice systems contribute towards the under-reporting of hate crimes and hate incidents against Christians in the OSCE region. This is clearly expressed by participants and representatives of Christian communities at a variety of ODIHR events including hate crime training workshops where they repeatedly raised concerns that physical and verbal assaults as well as the desecration of Christian sites and monuments are often not reported to the police or other relevant authorities. In some instances, perceived discrimination against them in state registration procedures compounds already fraught relations between Christian communities and state regulatory agencies. This

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<sup>1</sup> Ministerial Council Decisions 10/05, 13/06, 10/07 and the Bucharest Ministerial Declaration (2001).

situation increases the feeling of alienation and marginalization among some Christian communities in the region and undermines any effort to develop adequate strategies and policies that comprehensively address *all* forms of hate crimes and this specific form of intolerance.

It is extremely important that state interventions in this problem are expeditious and robust. It is especially so if one recalls that the security of all citizens and communities is one of the fundamental obligations of any state. Therefore, it is important to examine how co-operation and trust between law enforcement agencies, criminal justice practitioners and Christian communities can be enhanced to ensure that there is an effective corpus of legislation, policies and practices that addresses hate crimes and intolerance faced by Christian communities across the OSCE region.

With its expertise on hate crimes, the OSCE is well positioned to provide a forum for a discussion on this topic. Building on the existing commitments, the meeting will provide a forum where government officials, non-governmental organizations and representatives from Christian communities can explore challenges, share examples of good practices and make recommendations on how to address underreporting of hate crimes targeting Christians.

The objectives of the meeting are manifold:

- Raising awareness and outreach on hate-motivated crimes and incidents targeting Christians and their property and places of worship across the OSCE region;
- Explore the challenges related to underreporting of hate crimes targeting Christians in order to remove barriers to reporting, responding to and preventing such hate crimes;
- Examine state registration and regulatory procedures and how this impacts underreporting of hate crimes and incidents by Christians in the OSCE region;
- Exchange views on the role of governments and share good practices of co-operation between authorities and Christian communities, as well as recommendations on how to prevent and respond to hate-motivated crimes and incidents targeting Christians and;
- Encourage development of measures between Christian communities, civil society and governments that would encourage and improve recording and reporting of hate crimes targeting Christians.

The meeting will commence with an opening session to be followed by three working sessions. Discussions should be interactive, allowing for an exchange between the speakers, introducers and the participants. The first session will explore the extent and the nature of hate-motivated violence targeting Christians. The second session will focus on underreporting and exploring various responses to address this phenomenon. The third panel will examine best practices and recommendations aimed at building trust between Christian communities and authorities.

**Monday, 18 May, 2015**

**10.00 Opening Session**

**OSCE/ODIHR**

Michael Georg Link, Director ODIHR

**Keynote speaker**

Dr. Massimo Introvigne

**11:00 Coffee Break**

**11:15**

**Session I: Hate-motivated Crimes and Incidents against Christians in the OSCE area and beyond, including manifestations of intolerance and violence**

General overview of intolerance and discrimination against Christians with an emphasis on tackling hate crimes and incidents, including manifestations of intolerance and violence against Christians in the OSCE area and neighbouring regions, including the Mediterranean and MENA region, and of the specific challenges faced by Christian groups and communities. The participants are also invited to discuss the role and potential of the OSCE in addressing the above challenges, as well as measures on the national level for effective protection of Christians, including the security of clergy, consecrated persons, and Christian sacred sites, such as places of worship, shrines, cemeteries, monuments and symbols against vandalism and destruction, and give the respective recommendations

**Introducer 1**

Ms. Rima Tüzün

**Introducer 2**

Ambassador Dimitris Moschopoulos

**Introducer 3**

Dr. Anahit Khosroeva

**Moderator:**

Dr. Mattia F. Ferrero

12:45 **Lunch break**

14.15

**Session II: Discrimination against Christians: denial of rights, exclusion and marginalisation**

Intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief restricts the rights and freedoms of individuals. Overview of legislative measures leading to discrimination and social exclusion of Christians, including restrictive and burdensome procedures for acquiring legal status. The session will explore the impact on Christian majorities of the "positive discrimination". The discussion will also touch upon the discrimination of Christians and Christian communities in public life, which affects their daily life, including customs, clothing and appearance. The participants are invited to discuss the challenges faced by Christians in manifesting their religion or belief and in enjoying their right to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.

**Introducer 1**

Fr. Vsevolod Chaplin

**Introducer 2**

Dr. Gudrun Kugler

**Moderator:** Mr. Alexey Avtonomov (tbc)

15.45 **Coffee Break**

16.15

**Session III: Best practices and recommendations on tackling discrimination, intolerance and the denial of rights to Christians, with a focus on the underreporting of hate crimes and incidents targeting Christians**

The session will explore practices, programmes, policies and initiatives aimed at promoting and protecting freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief and addressing intolerance and discrimination, including under-reporting of hate crimes targeting other religious communities, which can be considered as "good practices" for addressing these issues in relation to Christians. Overview of main challenges to the collection of data and reporting on hate-crimes and intolerance against Christians in the OSCE area. The participants are also invited to discuss possible measures for enhancing collaboration between national authorities, relevant NGOs and religious communities to protect the rights of Christians and improve the data collection.

**Introducer 1**

Prof. Ombretta Fumagalli Carulli

**Introducer 2**

Pastor Young Osawaru

**Moderator:** Ms. Cristina Finch OSCE/ODIHR

17:45 **Closing Session**

**Moderator: OSCE/ODIHR**

Cristina Finch, Head Tolerance and non-Discrimination department, OSCE/ODIHR

**Feedback from sessions**

**Closing speech**

**OSCE/ODIHR**

Michael Georg Link, Director ODIHR

**OSCE Chairmanship**

Ambassador Vuk Žugić

Chairperson of the Permanent Council