

# OSCE 2015 HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING

WEDNESDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015 WORKING SESSION 14

TOLERANCE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION 11

## ***“PROVIDING FOR CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE IN OSCE MEMBER STATES”***

Every one of us would support the aims of this session, to promote tolerance and non-discrimination.

However I would like to appeal to all OSCE member states, including the UK, to consider how this equality can be achieved without losing the benefits of Christianity.

Because Christianity has shaped the values of many of the European nations represented here today, and many of the freedoms we are all seeking to protect actually originate from Christianity.

And we should not forget the innumerable Christian martyrs, in Britain and Europe, both Catholic and Protestant, who believed in these freedoms enough to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect them.

***Why should it be necessary to remind ourselves of this?***

Because many Christians in the UK today, and perhaps in other OSCE countries, feel discriminated against and marginalised from public life.

Michael Gove, former UK education secretary, has said:

*“To call yourself a Christian in contemporary Britain is to invite pity, condescension or cool dismissal.”*

And Sir Eric Pickles, UK Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust issues, has said:

*“In recent years long-standing British liberties of freedom of religion have been undermined by the intolerance of aggressive secularism”.*

Examples of this intolerance against Christians in Britain include:

- Christian street evangelists being arrested
- Perceived discrimination by OFSTED, the schools inspection authority, against Christian schools
- Employment issues where Christians have suffered because they refuse to carry out actions against their conscience, or even because they state their views
- And media attacks against fundamental Christian minorities

On behalf of all Christians in Europe, of whatever church or group, we respectfully suggest that the UK government, and all OSCE member states, follow these principles when drafting new legislation:

Firstly, to consult with Christian leaders, including those from smaller, fundamentalist churches

And, secondly, to make provision for Christian conscience in any proposed legislation

Thank-you for your interest.

*Peter Trevvett*

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