



**Statement**

ENGLISH only

**In Response to the Addresses by the Personal Representatives of the OSCE  
Chairperson-in-Office on Tolerance and Non-discrimination**

**delivered by Ambassador Arman Kirakossian, Permanent Representative of Armenia, at  
the 1198<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council**

**October 18, 2018**

Mr. Chairman,

We would like to thank the Personal Representatives of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Rabbi Andrew Baker, Prof. Salvatore Martinez and Prof. Bülent Şenay for reporting on their activities and highlighting existing issues of intolerance and discrimination based on religion.

Last year my delegation referred to the existential threats, which Christian communities and members of other religions face in the OSCE area and beyond, such as identity based violence, mass-atrocities, destruction and illegal expropriation of churches, cemeteries and religious symbols, dissemination of hatred through media and education.

International community including Armenia has recognized genocidal nature of violence targeting certain religious groups particularly Yazidis. Today the efforts of international community should go further than mere recognition. The rehabilitation of persecuted religious groups through victim-centered approach has been required as never before.

In this regard, it is important to recall that this year Nobel peace prize was awarded to Ms. Nadia Murat, a woman who was herself a victim of religious based grave human rights violation and who dared to stand against mass atrocities and enslavement of women perpetrated in the name of religion.

This highly symbolic award should encourage all of us to create enabling environment for rehabilitation of victims of identity based violence. Realization of the right to the truth is essential in this regard. Also, concerted humanitarian efforts on the ground is another important dimension of both protection and rehabilitation.

We should strongly condemn any misuse of religion including religious solidarity in the violent purposes. By the same token, attempts to introduce religious dimension to conflicts deepens dividing lines, nurtures hatred and further complicates their resolution.

We believe that tolerance and non-discrimination is possible only in the framework of overall protection of human rights. Fundamental freedoms, including freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association shape the necessary environment for protection of the members of religious groups.

In this regard, it is extremely important to raise awareness on international instruments, which protect religious groups and their members. The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide is a good opportunity in this regard.

These two landmark international documents are complimentary to each other particularly when it comes to the protection of freedom of religion and religious groups as they empower them by individual and collective rights of protection.

Mr. Chairman,

Last year Armenia hosted the Chairmanship and ODIHR Conference on “Preventing and Countering Hate Crimes against Christians and Members of other Religious Groups - Perspectives from the OSCE and beyond.

We look forward to the follow up of this Conference and stand ready to contribute towards further efforts of international and regional cooperation aimed at protecting members of religious groups from grave human rights violations.

Thank you.