



STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE

2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session, 16: Combating racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination - Hate crimes

Warsaw, 20 September 2018

Mr./Mme Moderator,

The Holy See notes with alarm that “Christians are the targets of hate crime across the OSCE region.”¹ Data collected and made available by the ODIHR indicate that anti-Christian hate crimes mainly and increasingly target places of worship, cemeteries and other religious properties, even where Christians are in the majority.

In addition, especially West of Vienna, certain sentiments and manifestations of intolerance and discrimination against Christians continue to exist as the last acceptable prejudice and seem to receive less attention than other forms of intolerance, presumably because of Christianity’s position as the historically dominant religion.

In this respect, it is important always to bear in mind that, as agreed by all participating States, “victims of hate crimes may belong to both minority and majority communities,”² and, as a wide group statement highlighted in the closing plenary session of the Tirana High-Level Conference on Tolerance and Non-Discrimination, “it has become outdated to talk about minority and majority religions,” since “all religions or beliefs are concerned, often in ways that go unnoticed.”³ On the other hand, too often the term ‘minorities’ is used as a synonym of ‘victims,’ as if the victims could belong only to minority groups.

Moreover, since in several jurisdictions crimes against property are considered less serious than those against persons, there is both the risk of under-reporting and reluctance to investigate and prosecute such crimes. Therefore, hate crimes against Christians are likely more numerous than those indicated in the annual reporting of the ODIHR and deserve greater attention.

¹ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/what-hate-crime/bias-against-christians>

² Ministerial Council Decision No. 9/09

³ *Closing remarks* of the European Union, PC.DEL/383/13.

With specific regard to the respect and protection for places of worship and religious sites, it is also important to recall that participating States have already committed themselves to “endeavour to prevent and protect against attacks directed at persons or groups based on thought, conscience, religion or belief” and to “adopt policies to promote respect and protection for places of worship and religious sites, religious monuments, cemeteries and shrines against vandalism and destruction.”⁴

The Holy See, while once more applauding the ODIHR’s document on *Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing of the Security Needs of Jewish Communities*⁵ and the drafting of a paper on understanding hate crimes against Muslims and addressing the security needs of Muslim communities, remains confident that, benefitting from the expertise derived from these Guidelines and in accordance with the common approach in addressing all forms of religious intolerance and discrimination without improper or hierarchical selectivity, the ODIHR will also draft guidelines on understanding hate crimes against Christians and addressing the security needs of Christian communities.

Finally, my Delegation wishes to underline the importance of data-collection in order to understand and address hate crimes. The website laudably managed by the ODIHR is an important tool, but under-reporting and under-recording limit its effectiveness. In particular, the Holy See wishes to recall that, in accordance with Ministerial Decision No. 9/09, the National Points of Contact are called upon to collect, maintain and make public disaggregated data on hate crimes perpetrated against members of different religions.

Thank you, Mr./Mme. Moderator!

⁴ Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/13

⁵ <https://www.osce.org/odihr/317191>



RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HOLY SEE

2018 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

Working Session 16: Combating racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination

Warsaw, 20 September 2017

To the Participating States

Participating States are urged to:

- carefully record hate crimes committed against religious properties;
- fully implement their commitment to adopt policies to promote respect and protection for places of worship and properties of all religious communities, benefiting from the expertise of the ODIHR in this field;
- provide disaggregated data on hate crimes, paying greater attention to the hate crimes against Christians – also where they are the majority – in the questionnaire collecting data from national data collection points.

To the OSCE/ODIHR

The OSCE/ODIHR is called upon to:

- develop and strengthen capacity building activities with regard to the protection of religious properties, including Christian ones;
- train law enforcement agencies, criminal justice system professionals and civil society to consider carefully also the hate crimes perpetrated against majority religious communities.