



Associazione culturale “**Giuseppe Dossetti: i Valori**”
TUTELA E SVILUPPO DEI DIRITTI

Osservatorio per la Tolleranza e la Libertà Religiosa
Observatory for Religious Tolerance and Freedom

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Religion-based intolerance and discrimination have received attention only since a few years. We all view with appreciation the efforts of the ODIHR and of the three Personal Representatives of the Chairman-in-Office to combat such phenomena. But much work is still to be done.

We should always bear in mind that the OSCE was created as a security organization and the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is at the heart of the OSCE’s concept of security because their violation can trigger instability and conflict in the OSCE Region. Therefore more attention should be paid to fulfil the existing commitments instead to other concerns out the boundaries of the OSCE *acquis* that are not matters of concern of the OSCE because not relevant for the security and stability of the Region.

West of Vienna anti-Christianism appears as the last acceptable prejudice and seems to receive less attention than other forms of intolerance because of Christianity’s position as the historically major religion. But we should bear in mind that OSCE commitments – as well as other international relevant instruments – protect minority religions as well as majority ones.

In many participating States there is a growing opposition to the public role of religion, which in some cases has resulted in the exclusion of the religion and its symbols from public life of citizens. As was noted by the UN Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, “it’s regrettable that societies with high level of income and education have openly expressed their aversion to see religious symbols in public”.

The OSCE and its participating States should reject the false idea that religions are a negative fact instead a positive factor for building and well-being of our democracies. If the freedom of religion or belief rightly protects also the non-believers, an anti-religious atheism which preaches the need to remove the religion from public space should not be welcomed. A similar approach



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would be at odds with the very concept of religious freedom provided by the OSCE commitments, which protect the religious phenomenon as such.

According to Principle 16 of Vienna 1989 Concluding Document the OSCE and its participating States should promote the participation of religious communities in public dialogue, even through the mass media. Consequently participating States should welcome the interventions of the representatives of religious communities that give their view – based on moral convictions deriving from faith – about everyday’s life and, in particular, on legislative and administrative provisions of their Countries. The attempt to exclude Christian believers from public discourse not only denies a rightful participation in politics but it can also easily slide into more overt discrimination or intolerance.

Too often the media and the Internet contribute to creating negative stereotype and prejudice against Christians. There are also recurring intolerant political and public discourses. In order to promote tolerance and non-discrimination the OSCE and its participating States should protect all religions – also the majority ones – from prejudice and negative stereotype and adopt practical measures to assure that the media as well as the political and public discourse are respectful for religions, their representatives, teaching and symbols. This will allow the public opinion to develop in a correct, mature way and it will foster a climate of mutual confidence and respect between religious communities as well as between believers and non-believers.

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