

# OBSERVATORY ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN EUROPE

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Working Session 6

Statement by Ellen Fantini, Executive Director

In regions both East and West of Vienna there are recurring hate-motivated incidents and hate crimes against Christians, including murder. Destruction of Christian cemeteries and churches occurs daily in some places.

The ODIHR and Participating States should avoid taking the position that hate crimes, intolerance, and discrimination against majority religions are somehow less serious than those committed against minority ones. The OSCE commitments apply to majority religions as well.

As Professor Martinez noted in his introductory remarks, anti-Christian incidents are often explained away as reflecting “modernity” or the “social malaise,” rather than taken as seriously as they should be.

Regarding the implementation of OSCE commitments, the Observatory applauds those countries that have improved their data collection and reporting on hate crimes against Christians. However, under-reporting and under-recording remain a serious problem.

Observatory submitted data on 155 hate crimes committed against Christians in 18 European countries to the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) for inclusion in its 2017 hate crimes report.

However, this hate crime data does not always provide a complete picture of the situation for Christians in Europe. Across Europe Christians have been fired, sued, and even arrested for exercising their freedom of expression or conscience. Christian-run businesses have been ruined financially, Christian student groups have been silenced, and Christian symbols and celebrations have been removed from the public square.

Here are two concrete recommendations to address both hate crimes and intolerance and discrimination:

First, we respectfully remind Participating States to continue to improve their efforts on data collection through measures such as increased involvement of civil society, disaggregated data and development of national action plans. To this end, 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, in accordance with Ministerial Decision No. 9/09.

Secondly, we urge Participating States to guarantee freedom of religion and belief by protecting the right to manifest those beliefs: through expression, speech, association, conscience, and parental rights