

# OBSERVATORY ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN EUROPE

OSCE Review Conference  
Warsaw, 30. September - 8. October 2010

Working Session 2: Tuesday, 27 September 2011, 10 a.m.–1 p.m

## "Fundamental Freedoms, including Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief"

The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians monitors and documents such cases in Europe. Our research is available to all stakeholders on [www.IntoleranceAgainstChristians.eu](http://www.IntoleranceAgainstChristians.eu)

We are frequently alerted to limitations to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief in the legislation of participating states, including West of Vienna.

We recommend to OSCE and participating states to pay particular attention to the following areas:

**1) Freedom of conscience in realm of healthcare**, particularly with regard to medical procedures that are considered unethical by many. Similarly, pharmacists must have freedom of conscience not to dispense chemicals, which they deem unethical, such as chemical abortifacients. This is by definition a major concern for Christian medical staff and pharmacists, but not exclusively.

**2) In the field of education** we urge OSCE/ODIHR to ensure the **right of parents to know and have a final say** on what their children are being taught with regards to religion and human sexuality.

**3) With regards to the teaching of religion**, freedom of religion is protected only if it is possible to teach religion in an affirmative way.

**Christian views on human sexuality must not be repressed** as a possible viewpoint in public schools. Religion teachers must retain the right to teach sexual ethics and morality. And Christian private schools must be free to teach Christian teachings.

**4) Wearing religious symbols**, such as crosses, rings, clerical clothing, etc, must be protected as a manifestation of freedom of religion.

**5) Freedom of conscience and freedom of contract must be respected with regard to private entrepreneurship.** In researching and documenting instances of discrimination against Christians in Europe we often come across the side effects of anti-discrimination legislation. We are extremely worried about equality legislation

which becomes itself discriminatory, especially in the area of the economic freedom of contract, as well as the institutional dimension of freedom of religion with regard to hiring policies. **Religious institutions** such as agencies, churches, missions, etc must not be forced to hire those opposed to the goals of the institution.

(Examples: A Christian architect should not be sued for declining to design a mosque; A Christian publisher should not be sued for declining to publish materials opposed to his/her faith; A Christian Advertising agency must not be sued for declining to advertise a lifestyle opposed to conscience.

**6) Expression of faith and its moral contents in the public square** must be possible without the threat of harassment, social exclusion and/or being ridiculed. Even if such expressions are critical of contemporary trends or deemed to be “politically incorrect”.

**A full guarantee of Freedom of Religion is vital for security and democracy, and we are very worried about the trends mentioned.**

Thank you for your attention,

Barbara Vittucci

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