

OBSERVATORY ON INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN EUROPE

Intervention on behalf of the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians by Ellen Fantini

HDIM 2015, September 30, Working Session 15, 3 pm.

Over the last eight years, the Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians has documented over 1500 incidents of intolerance and discrimination against Christians in the region west of Vienna. In a fragmented landscape of social hostility, negative stereotyping, vandalism, hate incidents and more or less subtle government restrictions, a concerning pattern becomes visible.

We are very grateful to OSCE and ODIHR for the seriousness with which the problem of intolerance and discrimination against Christians is being addressed. We applaud OSCE for seeking answers in numerous meetings and documents in which intolerance against Christians was specifically targeted.

We also would like to congratulate ODIHR for its annual hate crimes report to which we gratefully contribute the results of our research every year and to which we encourage participating states to contribute.

We have four concrete recommendations to contribute to the promising work already being done:

First, we respectfully remind participating states to combat underreporting by collecting disaggregated data on hate crimes against Christians. For example, in some countries, vandalism against a Christian church is merely reported as vandalism against a public building.

Secondly, we recommend to participating states to be aware of unintended discrimination, which could be caused as a side effect of anti-discrimination or equality policies. Excessive regulation of private conduct often forces Christians to choose to either violate their sincerely held beliefs or abandon their businesses or professions. An example of such overbroad legislation is the proposed EU fifth Equal Treatment Directive.

Thirdly, we reiterate our previous 2014 recommendation to OSCE to develop materials on how to combat intolerance against Christians and to disseminate them through the OSCE region. Manuals on how to combat anti-Semitism and discrimination against Muslims have previously been developed.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude with a fourth recommendation: In the light of horrifying global developments, combating persecution of Christians outside the OSCE area must become a priority of the foreign secretaries of participating states in their foreign policy.

This intervention is available online.

Thank you for your attention.

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