

Conference of European Churches
Governing Board

Brussels, 20 – 22 November 2019

<u>Doc N°:</u>	2GB2019_Doc15b
<u>Topic:</u>	Religious Freedom and Security
<u>Agenda Item:</u>	15
Staff in charge:	Elizabeta Kitanovic
<u>Recommendation:</u>	For approval
<u>Annex:</u>	Not applicable
<u>Earlier docs:</u>	Not applicable

Conference of European Churches

Project Description

1. Title of Project (Working Title)

Religious Freedom and Security

2. Kind of Project

Conference

3. Responsible Staff CEC Human Rights Secretary Dr Elizabeta Kitanovic

4. Introduction

Attacks on faith communities have increased in recent years, and many attacks have been against Christians. Churches of all denominations have been targets but the murder of Fr. Jacques Hamel in Normandy in July 2016, the bombing of churches on Easter Sunday, March 2016 in Lahore, the narrowly-averted church massacre in October 2018 in Louisville Kentucky, and the terrorist attacks against Catholic churches in Sri Lanka during the April 2019 Easter Sunday Mass represent a new form of threat.

The right to live in security is one of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the OSCE participating States – individually and collectively – bear the primary responsibility and are accountable for the protection of this right. In the Helsinki Final Act, the participating States recognized, among the Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States, “the universal significance of human rights and fundamental freedoms, respect for which is an essential factor for the peace, justice and well-being necessary to ensure the development of friendly relations and co-operation among themselves as among all States”. In this perspective security and human rights look complementary, interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Moreover, freedom of religion or belief has always been and still is, at the core of the OSCE's activities.

Ever since it was explicitly mentioned in the VII Principle of the Helsinki Decalogue and reaffirmed and detailed in many other subsequent commitments, the protection of religious freedom has continued to occupy a central place in the comprehensive approach of the OSCE to security. It heightens awareness of freedom of religion or belief not only as a universal human right to be protected for itself but also as a fundamental factor for the building and well-being of our democratic and pluralistic societies as well as for the creation of security within and between the participating States. The situation of Christian communities across the OSCE region raises serious concerns and seems able to erode social cohesion inside the participating States and the confidence between them. Threats and violent attacks against Christians, which can even result in the murder

of individuals, while profanation of Christian churches, cemeteries and other properties represents a daily reality in the entire OSCE area.

Data collected made available by the ODIHR show us that crimes committed due to religious hatred mainly and increasingly target churches, cemeteries and other religious properties. About 70% of hate crimes motivated by anti-Christian bias or prejudice recorded in 2017¹ were committed against properties. Since, in several jurisdictions, crimes against properties are considered less serious than those against persons, there is both the risk of under-recording and reluctance to investigate and prosecute these crimes. Moreover, hate crimes committed against Christians seem to receive less attention because of Christianity's position as the historically major religion. Therefore, hate crimes against Christians are certainly more numerous than those indicated in the annual reporting of the ODIHR and deserve more attention. Going to a church, as well as to a mosque or synagogue, is a fundamental freedom that should be guaranteed to everyone, everywhere. In certain zones only the presence of international military operations allows Christian communities to worship and maintain their physical presence.

This is the reality we have to confront when dealing with security of Christian communities. The OSCE² produced the policy guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief and Security in 2019³. It is important to inform the churches about the legal implications of this guidelines and to discuss how to work with the existing document.

5. Aim(s) of the Project

The Conference will discuss the following issues:

- a) The implementation of the OSCE guidance on religious freedom and security and role of churches/religious communities
- b) discuss "extremist" speech and literature and security
- c) screening, monitoring and search in places of worship

¹ <http://hatecrime.osce.org/2017-data> 5.11.2019

² In accordance with OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 3/13, 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".

³ The introduction is written on the basis of the analysis of Dr. Mattia F. Ferrero National Point of Contact on Hate Crimes of the Holy See and Michael Whine MBE, Director, Government & International Affairs Community Security Trust (CST) of World Jewish Congress

6. Objectives

The CEC Thematic Group will develop a detailed program.

7. Gender-Related Issues

There should be an equivalent number of male and female speakers.

8. Project Overview and timing

1st half 2020: One-day preparatory meeting with Thematic Group and visit to Kosovo (1244)

2nd half 2020: 2 days' conference

9. Potential Participants (Target Group)

The potential participants are representatives of CEC Member Churches dealing with religious freedom and security

10. Timing and Venue(s)

3-5 November 2020, Pristina/ Monastery Decani in Kosovo (1244)

11. (Potential) Partner Organisations

Serbian Orthodox Church, World Jewish Congress and OSCE

12. Press and Communication Aspects

The conference will be accompanied by press release

13. Follow-Up

Still to be discussed

14. Budget

26 295 euros

15. Workload

20 days for Executive Staff and 10 days for admin staff