



DECR representative attends OSCE meeting on freedom of religion in Europe

On November 10, 2020, Deacon Feodor Shulga, staff member of the Secretariat for Inter-Orthodox Relations, Department for External Church Relation, Moscow Patriarchate, attended the third Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Due to the quarantine measures the meeting was held in the teleconference mode.

Among other things, the OSCE annual meetings consider the progress made by states in the implementation of their commitments in the humanitarian sphere such as religious freedom, non-discrimination, prevention of hate crimes, and struggle with racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

Deacon Feodor Shulga made a report on the current situation of the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the territory of Ukraine and the recent facts of violation of their rights in several regions of the country. He emphasized that, despite a certain improvement in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's situation, a number of problems and threats to religious freedom remains pressing for her, among them, the discriminatory law aimed against her and still not reconsidered; the threat of the forcible renaming of her communities, and impossibility for her to register her dioceses, monasteries and parish communities.

The rapporteur also pointed to the facts of violence against the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and capture of churches in some Ukrainian western regions. He also mentioned the pressure exerted by regional authorities who maintain close cooperation with paramilitary organizations. He cited as an example the conflict at the town of Zolochiv, Lvov Region, in which the mayor of the town repeatedly came out with discriminatory and offensive statements with regard to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and her faithful while the local militants organized an attack on a private house of her cleric.

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