Communiqué of the International Conference on Freedom of Faith: the Problem of Discrimination and Persecution against Christians

The International Conference on Freedom of Faith: Problem of Discrimination and Persecution against Christians completed its work in Moscow on December 1, 2011, by issuing a communiqué. The text is given below.

The International Conference on Freedom of Faith: Problem of Discrimination and Persecution against Christians took lace in Moscow on November 30 – December 1, 2011. Taking part in the Conference were representatives of the Christian, Muslim and Jewish communities from Russia, Austria, Armenia, Belgium, Germany, Greece, Iraq, Italy, Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, the USA, Pakistan, Poland, Ukraine and France, diplomats, scholars, public and state figures.

The delegates expressed their concern about the situation of Christians in certain regions of the world, especially in the countries where they are in minority. Particular attention was paid to the situation of Christians in Iraq and other Middle East countries, in Egypt and other countries of North Africa, as well as in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, North Sudan, Indonesia, Eritrea, and India. Leaders and representatives of religious communities condemned acts of violence and discrimination against Christians, and spoke up for immediate measures to be taken in defense of the persecuted believers.

The participants in the Conference supported the statement on the growing manifestations of Christianophobia in the world issued by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church on 30 May 2011, the statement of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia on anti-Christian actions in the capital of Egypt on 11 October 2011, and other appeals in support of the persecuted Christians.

The participants welcomed the efforts of international organizations aimed at the ensuring the rights of Christians, including the European Parliament Resolution on the Situation of Christians in the Context of Freedom of Religion, the OSCE high-level meeting on Preventing and Responding to Hate Incidents and Crimes against Christians held in Rome on 12 September 2011, and other measures.

The participants met with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, who expressed his solidarity with Christian communities, representatives of which are becoming victims of violence and discrimination. The Patriarch stated an intention of the Russian Orthodox Church to consistently speak up in their defense and support.

The participants addressed an appeal to all the authorities to do anything possible to stop violence against Christian communities and believers, to stop killings, and desecration of churches and holy objects.

The participants in the meeting believe it inadmissible to link the violation of the rights of Christians with any traditional religion, and condemned extremism which uses religious feelings of believers for the

escalation of hatred towards Christian communities.

In order to accomplish the task of ensuring the rights of Christians and to achieve peace among representatives of all religions, the participants in the Conference spoke up for the necessity of supporting inter-Christian and inter-religious dialogue, the results of which ought to be a basis for good neighbourly relations among the followers of all traditional religions.

All those present unanimously called to develop a comprehensive and effective mechanism for protecting Christians and Christian communities who are subjected to persecution or restrictions in their religious life and work.

The participants called for the just judicial examination of the cases of violence against Christians and expressed their willingness to render legal aid to the victims wherever possible.

They underscored the necessity to draw serious attention of the world community to the problems of religious education and to work out norms and standards which would stand as barriers to spreading the ideology of hatred.

The delegates expressed their readiness to cooperate in defending Christian minorities in the regions where they are persecuted. This cooperation should include the exchange of information on the situation and the facts of discrimination of Christians, as well as material, legal, and political support to the persecuted. A desire was expressed to facilitate the establishment of an international body for monitoring discrimination against Christians and rendering assistance to them.

The participants arrived at a conclusion about the necessity to continue the studies in the problem of discrimination against Christians in the world and involve in these studies the leaders of all traditional religious communities, representatives of international organizations, national states, and civil society.

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